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SOLDIER

OCTOBER 2009 £3.50



IN THE HOT SEAT

General Richards on his new role as CGS



STRONG DEFENCE

Spurs' Michael Dawson sings the Army's praises

COMBAT CONCEPT

Battlefield blueprints
inspired by Afghan op



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SOLDIER

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Cover picture (left): Medical technician LCpl Michael Birkett (RAMC) takes a break after a patrol in Lashkar Gah Picture: Cpl Steve Wood, RLC

Background image: Gdsm Barry John Roberts (WG) stands guard outside of Muktar School, north of Lashkar Gah Picture: Cpl Steve Wood, RLC

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SOLDIER

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"Don't care what the pundits say, Smith... it'll never catch on... dammit man, it'll frighten the horses."

● The Blimp is back – Pages 26-27

Back to the future

FORGET *Tomorrow's World* – the best place to see the cream of the technological crop is through the military.

Sure, the BBC show might have been ahead of its time. But for every ATM machine or camcorder it featured there usually followed a procession of useless tat – most notably a fold-up car – destined for ridicule and commercial failure.

Not so with the boys and girls in green. Whether it's the latest weaponry or an ultra-futuristic piece of surveillance equipment, defence has a reputation for being at the very forefront of innovation.

A nose around the Defence Systems and Equipment International show at London's Docklands last month brought that fact sharply into focus. Contemporary operations have posed some unique challenges, but the good news for soldiers is that the world's technological boffins have some equally unique answers.

Ultra-accurate long-range missiles, new night vision capabilities, UFO-esque unmanned aerial vehicles – nothing seemed to be beyond the realms of possibility for the specialist companies displaying their wares in the capital (Pages 32-35).

But as awe-struck as we were by the brand-new Gucci gear, there is also something to be said for remembering the lessons of the past.

The airship was heralded as a key component in the future of aviation at the turn of the 20th Century before a series of high-profile accidents – most notably the Hindenburg disaster – brought the craft back down to earth.

It may sound like a lot of hot air, but the blimp is now poised to float back into the modern military arsenal. Defence contractor Lockheed

Martin is developing surveillance and lift vehicles which could help to reintroduce the humble airship to the modern battlefield (Pages 26-27).

Even something as simple as walking is now being looked at from an operational standpoint and a knee brace that converts footsteps into power is in the offing (Pages 30-31).

And not to forget our robotic cousins, we flick the on switch of the Energetically Autonomous Tactical Robot – a metal marvel that can keep going for longer than the Energiser Bunny by eating vegetation to create new energy.

Of course, the boffins behind these projects have a clear set of goals to aim at. With the conflict in Afghanistan occupying the minds of the British Army, most new kit and equipment is being designed precisely for service in Helmand province. This ties in with the Army's focusing of its efforts and resources on Afghanistan through Op Entirety and, in his first media interview as the new

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir David Richards told *Soldier* that the Service needs to "hold its nerve" on Op Herrick to successfully clamp down on the Taliban (Pages 43-45).

The continued bravery of today's troops, some of who were last month rewarded with operational honours (Pages 51-57), shows that the resolute service of those on the front line is not – and should never be – in question.

Elsewhere, this month's issue sees *Soldier* don coveralls and take a closer look at the Development and Selection process facing would-be Army recruits (Pages 47-49).

As we found out, it may be known as a basic assessment but the course ensures that only the best make it into the world's best Army. ■

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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture: Cpl Steve Wood, RLC

Prime position: Gordon Brown remains convinced that British troops are making a significant difference to the mission in southern Afghanistan

Herrick winnable maintains Brown

THE objectives of the international mission in Afghanistan remain “realistic and achievable” according to the Prime Minister.

Speaking at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Gordon Brown admitted asking a “great deal” of Britain’s Armed Forces during a “most difficult” of summers.

But he pledged that Op Herrick’s clear goals, particularly in developing the capability of the Afghan National Army (ANA), would help troops to defeat the Taliban.

“The more Afghans can take responsibility in the short term, the less our coalition forces will be needed in the long term,” he said.

Addressing the deadly impact IEDs have had in Helmand province, Brown said that stemming the use of roadside bombs was currently the coalition’s biggest challenge.

Despite sustaining significant casualties, 19 Light Brigade has uncovered more than 1,000 IEDs during its tour.

And 200 specialist troops are to deploy on Op Herrick to target the bomb-makers and track the networks responsible for laying the explosives.

“International casualties are almost twice as high as this time last year, and three quarters of these are now due to IEDs,” Brown said. “This is a tactic which is inherently hard to defend against, but... I am confident that we are fully focused on dealing with it.

“It requires not just new equipment, but new tactics, better surveillance, specialised troops and offensive operations – not just one single response but many.”

With the strength of the ANA due to expand from 80,000 to 134,000 by 2011, increased training being delivered by the International Security Assistance Force has already created a flow of 2,000 new soldiers each month.

Brown told the IISS that an increasing number of British troops have been devoted to training their Afghan counterparts, including a battalion deployed as an Operational

Mentoring and Liaison Team.

And the PM said that Britain would try to double the monthly number of new troops to 4,000 to bring the ANA up to full strength by November 2010.

“It is clear that to achieve this rapid increase in numbers – and to increase the quality of the new forces – would require a new approach, shifting from mentoring to partnering,” he said.

“This is the best route to success, the most effective way to transfer skills and responsibility to the Afghan security forces and the best way to gain the trust of the population – and the most effective way to complete our tasks.”

Likening the ideological battle with the Taliban to the Cold War, Brown said that success in Afghanistan will rely as much on winning hearts and minds as it will on “armies and treaties”.

“The task is not primarily ours – it is for the elected Afghan Government and the leaders of Afghan civic society. But we can and we must support them in this, just as we must support them in security, governance and development.”

SECOND World War veterans flocked to Bletchley Park to mark the 70th anniversary of the start of the conflict's codebreakers' work.

More than 115 people returned to the Buckinghamshire mansion where cryptanalysts worked to crack Nazi codes using the Enigma machine.

Simon Greenish, director of the Bletchley Park Trust, explained: "It was a great privilege to welcome so many veterans to Bletchley Park in this special anniversary year."

A TEAM of Colchester-based Army medics celebrated the tenth anniversary of the formation of 16 Medical Regiment with a gruelling charity run.

The group of 20 soldiers ran more than 100 miles over five days taking turns to carry a 50kg stretcher from their old home in Aldershot to Colchester Garrison.

Organiser WO2 Martyn Brabin said that the team wanted to raise as much money as possible for The British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association.

COL Tom Fleetwood has been named as the commander of Colchester Garrison.

Taking over from Col Tony Phillips, the married father-of-three said he was pleased to serve in his home town after 30 years in the Army.

The 50-year-old added: "Our role in Colchester Garrison is to provide what we call a firm base for 16 Air Assault Brigade and therefore we are responsible for all elements of its housing, schooling, welfare, medical, accommodation and other support services."

SERVICEMEN'S wives and girlfriends (Swags) are hoping to raise money for Help for Heroes by striking a pose in a new charity calendar.

Inspired by the film *Calendar Girls*, the project welcomed 49 willing participants who posed tastefully nude for a series of pictures taken by photographer Roy Gooding.

Swags organiser Kelly Monk said: "Everyone connected to the Forces is so proud of this charity and wants to raise as much money for it as possible."

The calendar is now on sale via the website www.swagcalendar.co.uk

AN UNMANNED air system (UAS) which will form a key part of the UK's capability has completed a set of inaugural flights.

The Watchkeeper UAS has now been given the green light to progress onto ground system and flight trials in the UK.

Alex Dorrian, CEO of programme developer Thales UK, said: "This is another landmark achievement for the Watchkeeper programme and just one of a number of trials that are scheduled over the coming months."

● **Ranked – Pages 32-35**

Home team sets tough targets

FORCES accommodation chiefs have launched a new drive to improve housing standards after setting a raft of ambitious goals to bring Service properties up to scratch.

Defence Estates chief executive VADM Tim Laurence (Royal Navy) told *Soldier* that his personnel would double their efforts to make sure that both single soldiers and families have a high standard of housing.

The senior officer was speaking after the publication of the latest Defence Estates Management Strategy, which sets out the organisation's intentions for the future.

The document's targets include



Picture: Chris Barker

Full house: Renovated married quarters in Chester

a drive to make sure that all Forces families are living in the two highest standards of accommodation within the next four years.

It is also hoped that half of all single soldiers will be housed in new Single Living Accommodation or fully-refurbished accommodation by 2013.

VADM Laurence was optimistic that Forces personnel at all levels would notice the difference in their accommodation standards if his targets were achieved.

"We have an old housing stock that has suffered from under investment," he explained. "If we had a magic wand, we would make sure improvements were made now."

"But we are now catching up after being behind the curve and are making progress. We have to undertake this task bit-by-bit and that is what we are doing."

"We have set ourselves a tough target with the families accommodation but we are focusing on the task and are currently on track to achieve our aims."

A reduction in the number of empty houses has also been planned as Defence Estates aims to halve the amount of unoccupied properties which stood at more than 20 per cent last year.

VADM Laurence was convinced that progress was being made on reducing the number of vacant properties and the associated cost to the MoD.

"We are also reducing the time it takes to refurbish a property when it has been vacated to help bring houses back on line more quickly," he concluded.

35 THE PERCENTAGE OF MILITARY STAFF WHO ARE **NOT** REGISTERED TO VOTE, ACCORDING TO MOD RESEARCH. TO FIND OUT HOW TO ENSURE YOU GET YOUR VOTE, VISIT WWW.ABOUTMYVOTE.CO.UK/ARMEDFORCES

Soldiers disable massive bomb

MILITARY experts were pressed into action in Northern Ireland after terrorists planted a massive IED on the border with the Republic.

Technicians were called to support police after the device – which contained 600 pounds of explosive – was discovered near the village of Forkhill, South Armagh.

The alert was raised after a call to a newspaper and soldiers were deployed to take part in the search for the bomb.

The IED was discovered linked to a command wire leading from the roadside to a firing point across the border. Irish Police have launched an investigation.

A spokesman for the Northern Ireland Garrison HQ said 20 residents had been evacuated while the bomb was diffused.

He also confirmed that Army EOD teams had been kept "extremely busy" in recent weeks, dealing with a number of explosive devices as well as bogus bomb claims.

In January a 300-pound IED was diffused in Castletwellan, County Down, while components for another device were found near Rosslea, County Fermanagh.

The spokesman added: "It is worth bearing in mind the pressures on the teams who deal with, on average, more than 30 calls each month to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland."

"As well as IEDs and pipebombs there has been a campaign of hoax alerts."

Extra security measures, including a quick reaction force, have now been introduced at bases in Northern Ireland.



SOLDIERS from The Parachute Regiment remembered the bravery of their forefathers as they jumped into Holland to commemorate a fated Second World War action. The troops joined Dutch and American counterparts to make the descent into Arnhem 65 years after the launch of the disastrous Operation Market Garden. A huge crowd that included several veterans watched the spectacle as 1,000 troops jumped from aircraft including a Dakota from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Operation Market Garden began on September 17, 1944 with the aim of capturing bridges on key routes through Holland by dropping three airborne divisions behind enemy lines. More than 1,500 British troops were killed in fighting around Arnhem and 6,500 were captured. Capt Will Hunt (2 Para) said it had been "the most enjoyable parachute jump I have ever done". He added: "In essence the young paratrooper is the same creature he was 65 years ago. Young men on a plane jumping into the unknown is the same as walking out of a forward operating base in Afghanistan expecting to come under contact."

Monty letter sold at auction

A UNIQUE slice of *Soldier* history fetched thousands of pounds when it went under the hammer at an auction of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery memorabilia.

An original hand-written message to troops, which was printed as an open letter on the front of the magazine's first issue in March 1945, was sold to a collector for £2,100 during the sale in Devizes, Wiltshire. An accompanying lot of four colour photographs of the officer accepting the German surrender were dispatched for £3,100.

In the morale-boosting letter, which set the tone for *Soldier's* first issue, the Field Marshal spurred on personnel as they entered the final phase of the Second World War.

"By no conceivable chance can Germany win this war – victory for the Allies, absolute and definite victory, is certain," the senior officer said.

Auctioneer Andrew Aldridge told *Soldier* that the items, which had been

held by the family of a member of Monty's personal staff, had attracted unprecedented interest.

He added: "There were several people involved in the bidding in the room and a couple on the phone lines – the letter went to a private collector who wishes to remain anonymous."

"There was also great interest in the four photographs during the auction, which we think are the only colour pictures of the German surrender."

Aldridge put the popularity of the memorabilia down to a fascination with Montgomery, whose leadership was crucial in

winning the war.

"These were unique and incredibly important pieces of history," he said.

"They mean a great deal because of who Montgomery was."

"Collectors see themselves as being custodians of a part of history," the auctioneer added. "They are preserving these items for future generations."



NEWS IN BRIEF

THE Army Health Promotion team has launched the 300 Club to reward soldiers who have excelled in their personal fitness assessments (PFAs).

Entry to the elite group is reserved for super-fit individuals who score marks of 100 in each of the three PFA tests – sit-ups, press-ups and a one-and-a-half mile run.

Personnel can upload their details and raw scores onto the club's website, which automatically enters them into a monthly prize draw to win a pair of UK Gear trainers.

The website has been designed so anyone can view the club's members and drop down lists will display competitors by unit, rank, age and scores to encourage healthy competition throughout the Service.

For more information visit www.armynet.mod.uk



GOOD DRILLS

208 FIELD HOSPITAL (V)

A QUARTET of TA soldiers from the north west cycled from Land's End to John O' Groats to raise money for Help for Heroes and Broughton House, a residential home in Salford. WO1 Tim Duckett, SSgt Mick Flaherty, Cpl Leanne Sheriffs and Cpl Andy Kelly were joined by Maj Neal Baguley, of 2 Medical Brigade, for the journey. Sponsor the team at www.justgiving.com/208bikeride

JOOLS HOLLAND

THE music maestro tickled the ivories in the grounds of his Kent castle for Royal Engineers who had returned from operations in Afghanistan.



Holland, who is a Deputy Lieutenant of the county, hosted 70 sappers including some from the Chatham-based Royal School of Military Engineering and Maidstone's 36 Engineer Regiment.

ELECTORAL FRAUD

SEVERAL hundred allegations of malpractice were made in the wake of the Afghan elections, although allied commanders insisted that security remained tight throughout the poll.

In a press conference, Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen added that nearly all of the 6,500 polling stations throughout the country had opened as planned.



MEDIA PESSIMISM

MILITARY top brass have mounted a searing counter-attack against some sections of the press amid allegations that Merlin helicopters are not fit for purpose in Afghanistan. Gp Capt Jonathan Burr, Station Commander at RAF Benson, dismissed the reports and said the kit was proven.

He added: "These helicopters were designed with battle damage in mind."

BAD DRILLS

Sky-high courage

A SOLDIER who suffered horrific wounds to his limbs refused to give up control of his radio and directed air support to his colleagues.

Cpl Paul Mather (AAC) was on patrol in Helmand province with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles and elements of the Afghan National Army when they found an old Russian anti-tank mine buried near their remote Forward Operating Base.

The platoon took up defensive positions as the device was dealt with and Cpl Mather coordinated air support for the troops.

"I was speaking to a pair of A10 jets and had them scanning the area around us looking for any threats to the patrol as we had gone firm," recalled the heroic NCO (pictured). "It was then that an RPG came over the wall and hit a soldier on his rucksack.

"It bounced off and landed on the floor in the middle of the patrol. I heard a massive shout of 'RPG' from the platoon sergeant and everybody dived into available cover."

The 28-year-old from St Helens narrowly missed the shrapnel but felt

his body go numb from the shock wave.

Shrapnel from a second RPG then ripped through his thighs and left arm.

"It hurt like hell, but after the explosions had stopped and my hearing came back I climbed through the irrigation ditch towards a stream," he said. "Once out of immediate danger I ran towards a group of soldiers who were treating other casualties.

"I had a hole in my left bicep that the medics applied a field dressing and tourniquet to in an effort to stem the blood flow.

"I also had lots of shrapnel injuries to the back of my legs and buttocks, one of which was a hole the size of my fist."

Cpl Mather quickly realised the A10s and Apache Attack Helicopters had seen the explosions and were trying to contact him for information.

Despite his injuries he picked up his radio handset and relayed details of enemy positions to the pilots. He was also heard giving instructions for two further strikes.

Cpl Mather was flown back to Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham and he is now recovering at home.



1.46 THE TOTAL AMOUNT IN MILLIONS OF POUNDS RAISED BY LAST YEAR'S **HELP FOR HEROES RUGBY UNION CHALLENGE MATCH**, WHICH TOOK PLACE AT TWICKENHAM

Chinooks down in Afghanistan

TWO British helicopters have been destroyed following separate incidents in Afghanistan.

A Royal Air Force Chinook carrying four people was deliberately targeted by a coalition airstrike after an engine fire forced it to make an emergency landing near Sangin.

A second Chinook was taken out of action ten days later after a hard landing damaged its undercarriage, nose and front rotor, rendering it unflyable.

The £40 million craft had been deployed on a mission to insert 15 soldiers from 2 Rifles Battlegroup into an area 10km east of Sangin.

Enemy action has not been ruled out

as the cause of the first incident, but an MoD spokesman said there was "no evidence" to suggest that the second helicopter was damaged by the Taliban.

Praising the crew of the Chinook that caught fire, Lt Col Nick Richardson said: "It is a measure of the bravery and skill of the pilots that, operating under enemy fire, they were able to complete their task and calmly move to safety.

"Their cool under pressure has ensured that their lives were saved."

Assets from the joint International Security Assistance Force and an extra Chinook deployed to theatre have been covering for the helicopters.





● London Irish's Kieran Roche on the ranges

Hot shots

A STELLAR squad of professional rugby players took up arms against some of the crack shots in the Forces to launch a charity calendar.

Stars including Ryan Lamb and England's Delon and Steffon Armitage pitted themselves against the Army Rifle Association's (ARA's) elite on the ranges of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

And the players proved to be a big hit as they promoted the 2010 Young Guns calendar, which has been created to raise money for Help for Heroes.

The tongue-in-cheek project saw players snapped in military kit and camo cream in an effort to make £150,000 for the charity.

In an interview with *Soldier* after firing the Army's latest arsenal, including the SA80 assault rifle and Light Support Weapon, London Irish player Lamb said: "I've always been in awe of the commitment of our Armed Forces and I think it's only fitting that they are looked after on their return from duty."

England winger Ugo Monye added: "In rugby we talk about the pitch being a battlefield and going to war on a Saturday.

"But it really puts life into perspective when you hear these soldiers' stories."

Maj Peter Cottrell (PWRR), chief instructor of operational marksmanship at the ARA, said: "Both rugby and the military share a great team ethos."

● www.rugbyforheroes.org.uk

Recruiting figures on the up

THE UK Armed Forces are currently at 97.5 per cent of their full-time trained strength requirement, according to the latest MoD figures.

A total of 23,570 new recruits have joined the Regular Forces in the 12 months up to June 30, 2009 – an increase of 8.7 per cent compared to the same period in 2008.

It has also been reported that the number of people leaving the Regular Forces has fallen by 15.7 per cent, the lowest figure in five years.

Reacting to the figures, Defence Minister Kevan Jones said: "People understand that our country's security is at risk if we allow Afghanistan to become a safe haven for terrorists.

"By serving with the Armed Forces they will be helping to keep Britain safe – I believe this is why a growing number of people build careers in the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy."

As of July 1, 2009 the full-time strength of the UK Armed Forces was 174,010 against a target of 178,470.

Herrick flight numbers take off

CAMP Bastion has become one of the busiest British-operated airports in the world.

Latest figures show the airfield, in the heart of Helmand province, is now busier than Luton, Edinburgh and Birmingham with more than 11,000 movements each month. Only Stansted, Manchester, Gatwick and Heathrow are more hectic than the Afghan outpost.

Air crew responsible for coordinating the huge operation are the first to admit that it is a testing task, but are satisfied that they are on top of their mission.

Sqn Ldr Steve Smith (RAF), senior air traffic control officer at Camp Bastion, said that a massive increase in the coalition's operational tempo had contributed to the boom in flights.

He added: "You won't find any last-minute deals or duty free shops at Bastion but we are still busier than most consumer airports. That's pretty impressive for a former dirt track.

"Now the air traffic control team are handling on average 400 aircraft movements per day or 12,000 a month, ranking it just below Stansted Airport. And Bastion air traffic control has the challenge of dealing with a large number of jets, helicopters and drones, all operating from different locations."



Picture: Graeme Main

NEWS IN BRIEF

SOLDIERS are being invited to put pen to paper to enter a writing competition.

The Society of Civil and Public Service Writers event is made up of categories including short stories, travel articles and poems and is open to military personnel and civil servants.

The last date for entries is February 28 next year and scribes are asked to submit their work in a typed and double-spaced format on A4 paper. Prizes are on offer for the winners.

For more information about the competition, visit www.scpsw.co.uk

THE King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery put on a spectacle for London tourists after temporarily taking over the Queen's Life Guard duties.

Allowing the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment to take its summer leave, the gunners rode to Whitehall from their barracks in St John's Wood and fulfilled their duties as sentries on Horse Guards Parade.

Centre section trumpeter Gnr Nicola Longprice said: "Interacting with the public is a great experience and continually having your picture taken is rather novel."

NEWS IN BRIEF

A PSYCHOLOGIST who specialises in treating the fear of flying is offering soldiers his services for free.

Professor Robert Bor and his team at London's Royal Free Hospital have developed a course to help the estimated 30 per cent of Britain's adults who suffer from the phobia.

Bor told *Soldier* that he believes many Service personnel feel too embarrassed to admit their fears or to look for help.

He said: "You would be surprised at the amount of people who seek treatment. A fear of flying can develop after a bad experience on an aircraft or after a traumatic event.

"I want to offer the treatment for free to show my appreciation for the hard job soldiers are doing in Afghanistan at the moment."

The 49-year-old, who once served with the South African Army and is a qualified pilot, added that the substantial amount of time troops can spend on all types of aircraft could explain why some develop an anxiety about flying.

Although there are many symptoms of aviation anxiety, the most common are loss of appetite, insomnia, irritability, being hyper-alert and having a low mood before and during a flight.

To speak to Professor Bor or his team email Robert.Bor@royalfree.nhs.uk

● To mark the release of Bor's new book, *Soldier* has ten copies of *Overcome Your Fear of Flying* to give away. To stand a chance of winning, just answer this question: **What percentage of the adult population is affected by a fear of flying?** Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by October 30.

0 THE PRICE IN POUNDS FOR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN TO ENJOY A SESSION ON THE SILVER BLADES ICE SKATING RINK AT CANNOCK, IN STAFFORDSHIRE. MILITARY PERSONNEL CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFER BY VISITING THE RINK AND PRESENTING THEIR ID CARDS, WHILE DISCOUNTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE HIRE

Blast off for improved Med Man

THE first unit to undergo the remodelled Exercise Medicine Man in Canada has returned ready to fight in Afghanistan.

The Royal Dragoon Guards Battlegroup deployed to British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) in



Big bang: IED training on the Canadian prairie

Alberta to carry out the training.

Alongside traditional live firing there was a strong emphasis on hybrid warfare and operating in a non-conventional environment.

Afghan actors and interpreters worked in the newly-constructed village of Pakharistan on the prairie and soldiers were faced with mock suicide bombers and other realistic scenarios.

Capt Luke Tory of The Royal Dragoon Guards, part of 4 Mechanised Brigade, said: "This was an immensely enjoyable exercise and the training value and lessons learnt were second-to-none.

"Importantly we have still been able to maintain our core Armoured Corps skills; however we now have to deal with some of the asymmetric complexities encountered on contemporary overseas operations.

"This has been an invaluable start to our Op Herrick training for 2010."

Capt Jon Gilbody, of 4 Mechanised Brigade, added: "This Batus was the first time that hybrid warfare was specifically trained. Batus is traditionally about conventional warfare. This time it was about training in an Afghan-type environment covering all spectrums of conflict in the 360 degree battlefield."

108 THE DISTANCE IN MILES THAT CHEFS FROM 16 AIR ASSAULT BRIGADE RAN FROM COLCHESTER TO ARNHEM TO MARK THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£4,485	LT TOM BARCLAY Intrepid officer Barclay, a physiotherapist at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, hopes to top £10,000 by running 160 miles through the Sahara desert	Pancreatic Cancer UK
2	£2,278	16 REGT RA OFFICERS' MESS The gunners' Blitz-themed summer ball in Rutland attracted 320 guests who enjoyed a flypast and aerobatic display from a Messerschmitt 109 and a full-size Spitfire replica	Help for Heroes and Army Benevolent Fund
3	£1,750	GREAT BALLS OF FUR A team of soldiers got behind the wheel of a fur-covered fire engine to drive it on an 8,000-mile journey from Goodwood in England to Mongolia	Help for Heroes
4	£1,000	CHICHESTER JAZZ CLUB Inspirational officer Maj Phil Packer (RMP) was among the guests as the music group hosted a week-long festival of events and activities to raise money for injured Service personnel	Help for Heroes



TV show success for 'Drill Sergeant'

A SUPER-FIT officer dispatched his civilian opposition to become "Champion of Champions" on BBC1's *Total Wipeout* programme.

Lt James Scott, from The King's Royal Hussars, beat 21 other competitors over a series of extreme assault courses and obstacles.

The show, presented by Richard Hammond, saw the 25-year-old put all of his Army training into practice to win the £10,000 first prize.

TV viewers saw the troop leader – nicknamed "The Drill Sergeant" – stride into first place while most contestants ended up face down in mud or water.

The 6ft 5in, 15-stone officer said: "The sweeper was definitely the most difficult event, with the bar getting higher and coming round more quickly.

"My Army training was of huge benefit – not hesitating, going head first into things and the ability to keep going in difficult situations helped."

Out of his winnings Lt Scott (pictured above) has already paid for his troop to have a day out go-karting and he plans to make donations to the Army Benevolent Fund and Help for Heroes.

NEWS IN BRIEF

RABBI Arnold Saunders has been appointed as the first Jewish Civilian Chaplain to the Military (CCM).

The Rabbi will be responsible for the spiritual and pastoral care of all Jewish personnel in the Armed Forces.

"I am looking forward with relish and excitement to the challenges that lie ahead and look forward to working with my fellow CCMs and all military chaplains," he said. "I would like to pay tribute to the Rev Weisman who has given distinguished service as the Honorary Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Military for many years."

Marathon test for Rhodes runner

A FORMER rifleman who was left with serious injuries following a motorcycle crash plans to complete the Brighton marathon to raise money for charity.

Matthew Rhodes was serving with The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment when he was involved in a near-fatal road accident in Germany in 1995 – just days before his 21st birthday.

The 34-year-old from East Sussex, who completed a tour in Bosnia, was left blind and paralysed down his right side, but has never let his injuries hold him back.

The ex-Army man has raised thousands of pounds for charity by taking on gruelling challenges such as paragliding, swimming from pier to pier in Brighton and skydiving.

In 2007 he completed the London marathon in ten hours 40 minutes, however the former private was left disappointed after the event's organisers packed away the finish line before he had completed his race.

Extreme sportsman Rhodes explained that he enjoys pushing himself to the limit in spite of his injuries.

He added: "I want to raise awareness of disability in society and also show the lads, recently injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, that anything is possible.

"I suffered a lot of brain damage and as a result I lost emotion and therefore I never feel sad, but I am also never overly happy either."

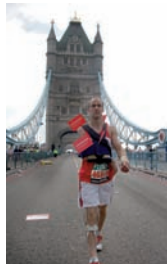
The married father-of-four is currently in training for the Brighton marathon, which takes place on April 18, 2010 and plans to complete the race over a period of two days to raise money for St Dunstan's and The Guide Dog Association.

Speaking of the night of his accident, Rhodes told *Soldier*: "I have no memory of the crash but I am aware that if it

wasn't for the officer who found me, I may not be here today.

"I never got to thank him. But, whoever he is, I am so grateful to him for helping me."

● If you would like to sponsor Rhodes or to show your support during his two-day marathon visit www.justgiving.com/matthew-rhodes or www.justgiving.com/mattandkarlo ■



4.80

THE PRICE IN POUNDS OF THE DISCOUNTED ENTRY ON OFFER TO SOLDIERS VISITING THE VIEWING DECK AT PORTSMOUTH'S LANDMARK 170-METRE SPINNAKER TOWER

Army sing star hits right notes

A SOLDIER who recently deployed to Afghanistan has fulfilled his ambition by taking on hard-nosed judge Simon Cowell and singing on TV talent show *The X Factor*.

Sgt Ian Edwards (Gren Gds) dressed in his number twos to deliver a rendition of Elvis Presley's hit *If I Can Dream* to the ITV programme's imposing panel of judges.

And he was a roaring success with Danni Minogue rating the senior NCO as "hot" and Louis Walsh stating his surprise at the soldier's talent.

Sgt Edwards made it past the first audition to boot camp, but *Soldier* readers will need to tune in to the show, aired on Saturday evenings, to see if he makes it any further.

Speaking before deploying

on ops, 43-year-old Edwards said: "My kids encouraged me to apply and go on to the programme. Due to all the pre-deployment training I had little time to prepare, but I did really well.

"I chose to wear my uniform because I am really proud of the regiment I have served with for 22 years."

The Aldershot-based guardsman has now teamed up with musical theatre director Paul Rhodes to perform in a Service personnel-only show in 2010. Rhodes is currently scouring the UK for talented singers, musicians, dancers, comedians and backstage support from across the British Forces.

● To find out more about the show, email ourboysshow@hotmail.co.uk



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IN MEMORIAM



SJT PAUL MCALEESE (29)
2ND BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA AUGUST 20 – AFGHANISTAN



PTE JOHNATHON YOUNG (18)
3RD BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA AUGUST 20 – AFGHANISTAN

EMBATTLED soldiers fighting in southern Afghanistan have been coming to terms with the deaths of two valued colleagues who fell victim to roadside bombs.

Pte Johnathon Young (3 Yorks) and Sjt Paul McAleese (2 Rifles) were killed in two blasts during a foot patrol around the settlement of Sangin, Helmand province. Both had been helping to provide security for the elections.

Born in Hereford, Sjt McAleese (29) joined 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets in 1997 and had served on ops in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Kosovo.

The sniper, who leaves a wife and baby son, was remembered for his professionalism while in the thick of the action in both Kajaki and Sangin during his Herrick tour.

Lt Col Rob Thomson, CO of 2 Rifles, said the loss of Sjt McAleese had been a huge blow. He added: "Everyone looked up to him and wanted to be in his team.

"Militarily there was nothing he wasn't good at – he was fearsomely fit, a talented shot and a man who saw this campaign in its wider perspective. He had been superb in Iraq, our last encounter with the Queen's enemies, and stood very tall."

Sjt McAleese's wife Jo said in a statement: "You were my best friend and my hero – you were an amazing daddy to Charley and the best husband I could have asked for."

C Company Sergeant Major WO2 Simon Thompson remembered Sjt McAleese as "a

rifleman through and through", adding: "He was keen, fit and well-motivated. He wanted nothing but the best for his platoon and brought the best out of them."

Pte Young (18) had been in the Army for just over a year but had been recognised by superiors as a soldier with great potential. A popular man with faultless manners, he had volunteered to deploy to Afghanistan to fill gaps left by wounded soldiers.

Originally from Hull, the teenager leaves behind his mother, brother and girlfriend. A statement from his family said: "John was so handsome – he will be loved and missed by all who knew him – we are so proud of him; he was our braveheart."

Lt Col Tom Vallings, commanding officer of 3 Yorks, said Pte Young had already made his mark as a selfless soldier who always put his comrades before himself.

The CO added: "He had a strength of character that forced him to be at the very centre of events and it was no surprise that he volunteered to deploy to Afghanistan at such short notice. In his 18 years he made a big impact on those who knew and served with him. His loss is felt by us all but none more so than his family."

Pte Young's platoon commander, Sgt Steven Harrison, shared the sentiments. "He displayed a huge amount of enthusiasm, was very eager to deploy on operations and enjoyed the respect of his commanders and peers," the NCO added.



SGT STUART MILLAR (40)
3RD BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA AUGUST 31 – AFGHANISTAN



PTE KEVIN ELLIOTT (24)
3RD BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA AUGUST 31 – AFGHANISTAN

AN EXPLOSION caused by a Taliban RPG killed two soldiers from the same battalion during a foot patrol in Helmand.

Sgt Stuart Millar and Pte Kevin Elliott of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland were attacked by insurgents in Babaji district.

Sgt Stuart "Gus" Millar (40), a mortar fire controller, was famously caught on the ITN news on the first day of Op Panther's Claw complaining the firefight had delayed his "morning brew".

Lt Col Stephen Cartwright, commanding officer of 3 Scots, said: "It was typical of the man: in the thick of the action, professional expertise to the fore, combined with his wonderfully positive and humorous style.

"He has given his life in the service of his comrades, for The Royal Regiment of Scotland, his country and the people of Afghanistan."

Maj Matt Munro, officer commanding Alpha (Grenadier) Company, recalled Sgt Millar as a "caring friend and devoted family man".

Sgt Millar leaves behind his wife Jillian and daughter Grace.

A statement from the proud Scotsman's family said: "Gus always wanted to be a soldier from a very young age.

"He was very brave and is a credit to both our family and the Army. We are really proud of him as a father, son, brother and soldier."

Pte Elliott was set to leave the Army just

weeks before deploying to Afghanistan but he dramatically reconsidered because he "didn't want to miss the boys".

Lt Col Cartwright said: "Pte Elliott was an awesome fighting Jock, who was very much in his comfort zone here on demanding operations in Afghanistan.

"He was on the verge of leaving the Army but his inclination to be in the thick of the action was too tempting and he caught the last transport to Afghanistan with his mates."

Capt Harry Gladstone, fire support group commander, explained how 24-year-old Pte Elliott decided his place was on the battlefield rather than civvy street.

"I remember talking to him shortly before we left Inverness to deploy to Afghanistan in March. He was dressed in his civilian clothes, having been de-kitted, and about to walk out of Fort George back to civilian life when he decided to sign back on.

"When asked why he decided to sign back on he simply said 'I didn't want to miss the boys'."

Pte Kyle Russell said of his colleague: "Kev was kind and generous. He was a terrible singer but my fondest memory of him was sitting in the back of a vehicle screaming out *I Got You Babe* at the top of his voice."

Pte Elliott's family added in a statement: "Kevin was a loving son, brother, grandson, nephew, uncle and cousin who will be sorely missed by the whole family."

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IN MEMORIAM



LCPL RICHARD BRANDON (24)
ROYAL ELECTRICAL AND
MECHANICAL ENGINEERS
KIA SEPTEMBER 2 – AFGHANISTAN

A TALIBAN IED claimed the life of a driver while he was carrying out an essential resupply task.

LCpl Richard Brandon, of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, was killed instantly in the explosion in Gereshk, Helmand province.

The 24-year-old vehicle mechanic, who was a driver with A Squadron, The Light Dragoons' fitter section, leaves behind parents Anna and Geoff, fiancée Emma-Jayne Webster, daughter Kaitlin and stepsons Liam and Martyn.

Emma-Jayne said: "Richie was a wonderful fiancée and father and stepfather to Martyn, Liam and our daughter Kaitlin.

"We couldn't have asked for more. He will be very sadly missed by all that knew him. He loved his job. I feel privileged to have spent

four-and-a-half years of my life with him."

Lt Col Gus Fair, commanding officer of The Light Dragoons, was full of praise for LCpl Brandon's steadfast commitment to the Army's cause on Op Herrick.

"Through a very tough and demanding period of fighting, he worked relentlessly to keep the troop's vehicles fully operational and battle-worthy," he said.

"He also had an uncanny ability to always be covered in dust and oil which epitomised his work ethic.

"He was a devoted individual, always steadfast in the face of adversity, and whose modesty and decorum earned him the respect of the troop he supported."



PTE GAVIN ELLIOTT (19)
2ND BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 3 – AFGHANISTAN

A MUCH-RESPECTED gunner known to his peers as "the soldiers' soldier" was killed after he was struck by enemy fire while on foot patrol in Afghanistan.

Pte Gavin "Billy" Elliott, 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, died during a clearance op in Babaji district, Helmand province.

He was shot and fatally wounded by insurgents and, despite the best efforts of his platoon to extract him from the scene, he died on the way to hospital.

The family of the 19-year-old, who was from Worksop, said: "For all those who knew Gavin, there will be a void that will never be filled.

"In our eyes, Gavin was a hero and the best son and soldier we could have wished for."

Pte Elliott forged a reputation for always taking the lead in dangerous situations after completing basic training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick in 2007.

Lt Col Simon Banton, Pte Elliott's CO, described him as a professional and hardworking individual who inspired the utmost confidence in those around him.

He added: "Gavin was developing as a leader of men and I have no doubt he had a successful career ahead of him.

"The British Army is lucky that men of Gavin's calibre are among us.

"We will miss him greatly but our loss is nothing to the devastation of his family. Stand easy brother, your duty is done."



CPL JOHN HARRISON (29)
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 9 –
AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS serving on Op Herrick have been remembering a colleague who gave his life in an operation to rescue a captured journalist.

Cpl John Harrison died in the action in the early hours of September 9 as troops moved to free reporter Stephen Farrell from the hands of Taliban insurgents.

The journalist was released and was receiving support from the British Embassy as this issue went to press although his interpreter, Sultan Munadi, was killed.

Cpl Harrison's commanding officer, who has not been named, described the 29-year-old senior NCO as a "remarkable man".

The CO added: "Cpl John Harrison was an immensely capable, self-effacing and highly

likeable soldier with an irrepressible humour. His hallmark was an undemonstrative, yet profound professionalism – he was unflinching and inspirational.

"He gave his life for his comrades and the Parachute Regiment, both of which meant so much to him. Although his passing is a sad day for us, every member of the unit counts themselves privileged to have known such a tower of strength."

Cpl Harrison's family said the NCO would be sorely missed by everyone who knew him.

Their statement added: "John was a wonderful son and brother and a dedicated soldier who was greatly loved and cherished by his family and friends."



FUS SHAUN BUSH (24)
2ND BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF FUSILIERS
AUGUST 25 – SELLY OAK

A FUSILIER who was caught in an explosion as he attempted to rescue his platoon sergeant died in hospital surrounded by his family.

Fus Shaun Bush had been taking part in a foot patrol in Sangin district, Helmand province on August 15 when an IED detonated, killing Sgt Simon Valentine.

The young soldier was then caught in a second blast. The 24-year-old, known as "Bushy" by colleagues in 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, was evacuated back to the UK but died of his injuries at Selly Oak Hospital.

Fus Bush's father, Carl, said it was in his son's nature to help those in need.

"Shaun was an extremely brave soldier who

died while doing the job that he loved," he said.

"He wanted to serve with the Army from a very young age. Shaun was a tremendous athlete who excelled at both football and boxing.

"He was a kind and generous man who was very family-orientated and he would not hesitate to help others in need."

Maj Darren Denning, chief of staff with 2 Rifles Battlegroup, described the soldier as a "fighter", adding: "Fus Bush was at the heart of his platoon and company and was in every sense a fighter.

"He acted decisively and courageously, coming to the aid of his comrades. That he was to die of wounds received whilst demonstrating such courage is typical of the man."



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IN MEMORIAM



KGN JASON DUNN-BRIDGEMAN (20)
2ND BATTALION, THE
DUKE OF LANCASTER'S REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 13 – AFGHANISTAN

A FIERCELY loyal and dedicated soldier died after he suffered a gunshot wound to the neck while on patrol in Helmand province.

Kgn Jason Dunn-Bridgeman of 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment had been on foot patrol in Babaji district when his platoon exchanged fire with the Taliban.

Kgn Dunn-Bridgeman, known as "Dunny", deployed to Afghanistan with Blenheim Company and was part of a four-man clearance team that was at the forefront of every patrol.

Officer commanding Maj George Maund said: "He was a fiercely loyal and dedicated soldier and an utterly selfless person."

"Although still in the early stages of his military career, he had shown great promise and

was a natural soldier and infantryman.

"His life and career have been cut short but we take comfort in the knowledge that he died doing what he loved."

Friend and colleague Kgn David Corcoran added: "He was the sort of bloke that you wanted to have as a mate."

"He was always a good laugh and had an infectious sense of humour. He helped make difficult times more bearable and was always the one to lift spirits when they started to flag."

The 20-year-old joined Arnhem Company in May 2008 and volunteered to move across to Blenheim for possible deployment. He enjoyed adventurous training and had attended courses in parachuting and paragliding.



A/SJT STUART MCGRATH (28)
2ND BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA SEPTEMBER 16 – AFGHANISTAN

A GIFTED leader and much-loved husband and father was killed doing "a job he loved" as he and his fellow riflemen battled to bring stability to Afghanistan.

A/Sjt Stuart "Mac" McGrath, who was serving with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, died in an explosion near Gereshk, Helmand province.

The 28-year-old, who was from Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire, had served in the Army for the past decade, starting his career in The Royal Green Jackets.

Remembered as a supremely fit and determined individual, the NCO had specialised in mortars from an early stage in his career and was constantly striving for excellence.

His wife Emma said in a statement: "Stuart

was an amazing father, son, brother, cousin and friend to many. We are all so proud of him and what he achieved – he died doing a job he loved, is our hero and we will never forget him."

Lt Col Rob Thomson, commanding officer of the 2 Rifles Battlegroup, described the NCO as a "rock hard mortarman", adding that his battalion had lost one of its rising stars.

The CO said: "He was one of the youngest members of the sergeants' mess, and I can still see the pride on his face when I had the privilege to promote him earlier this year."

"He knew only one lane – that was the fast lane and he was always in it at work, at home and at play. We have lost a star and the hole he leaves behind is huge."



TPR BRETT HALL (21)
2ND ROYAL TANK REGIMENT
SEPTEMBER 16 –
SELLY OAK

COMMANDERS and soldiers have been paying tribute to a much-respected colleague and friend who died in hospital after being wounded in southern Afghanistan.

Tpr Brett Hall, who was from Dartmouth, was injured when his Viking vehicle was caught in an explosion during a patrol in north-west Helmand on September 12. He was evacuated back to the UK but died four days later at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

Remembered as a "tower of strength", the 21-year-old joined the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment two years ago and quickly forged a reputation for excellence.

Although he had initially qualified as a Challenger 2 driver, the member of Egypt

Squadron had converted to the Viking for his Op Herrick tour, which began in June.

Lt Col Marcus Simson, CO of 2 RTR, said Hall would be much-missed by his many friends and colleagues. He added: "Quietly getting on with business, he would be found on the tank park making sure his vehicle was ready. When it was he was helping someone else with theirs."

"He was loved by all who knew him as a happy, hardworking young man who was full of fun and desperately proud of his squadron and their achievements."

Maj Charlie Burbridge, Egypt squadron leader, said Tpr Hall had shown the highest standards of professionalism and had made a real difference during his Herrick tour.



A/SGT MICHAEL LOCKETT (29)
2ND BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA SEPTEMBER 21 – AFGHANISTAN

AN outstanding soldier who was awarded the Military Cross for his supreme courage and leadership was killed in an explosion while on patrol in Helmand province.

A/Sgt Michael Lockett of 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment was investigating the discovery of an IED close to Patrol Base Sandford, near Gereshk, when the device detonated. Two other soldiers were injured.

Commanding officer Lt Col Simon Banton said: "The Mercian Regiment has lost one of its brightest and best, and a true hero."

"Sgt Lockett was one of the most impressive soldiers I have ever met. He maintained consistently high standards and was a brave man, no stranger to battle."

Pte Alex Sheridan, of 2 Mercian, added:

"Whatever the situation you were in, you could be sure that the decision he made on the ground was always the right one."

"When you were on patrol with him you felt safe, he was an inspiration to young soldiers like myself."

The 29-year-old, from Monifieth in Angus, served in Bosnia and Northern Ireland and returned for his third tour of southern Afghanistan earlier this year.

At Garmsir in 2007, he displayed immense courage and steadfast commitment as he helped rescue wounded comrades trapped in a Taliban ambush. He was later awarded the Military Cross for his actions.

NEWS IN BRIEF

TROOPS serving with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles in Afghanistan received a morale-boosting visit from a royal guest as their tour drew to a close.

The Earl of Wessex spent two days talking to soldiers who have been bringing peace and stability to Sangin in Helmand province.

Prince Edward, who is the Royal Colonel of 2 Rifles, presented the soldiers with a selection of fresh food for dinner.

Lt Col Rob Thomson, CO of 2 Rifles, said the prince had been in "the closest support" throughout the tour.

The senior officer added: "It has been a real boost to the riflemen whose courage and resolve in the face of the most challenging circumstances has been exemplary."

TERRITORIAL Army soldiers are now eligible to enter the Army Sports Lottery.

The move is one of a number of changes to the popular draw, which hands out tens of thousands of pounds in prize money to troops every month.

More information about the new lottery rules can be found on 2009DIN10-041.

SOLDIERS from 11 Light Brigade have been presented with new sandproof training shoes ahead of their deployment to Afghanistan.

Trainer manufacturer UK Gear issued 40 pairs of its PT-03 Desert shoes to personnel based at the brigade's headquarters in Aldershot.

The company has been working alongside the Army Physical Training Corps to develop the trainers, which allow personnel to run safely and in the hottest and most arid environments.

Maj Brian Dupree (APTC) said: "We have helped with the design and testing of the shoes and the reports from the front line have been very good."



THE Queen personally presented Elizabeth Crosses to the families of six soldiers who died while serving on overseas operations.

Her Majesty handed over crosses and memorial scrolls, which are awarded to the next of kin of all Armed Forces personnel killed in conflicts since 1948, during a visit to The Queen's Royal Lancers in Catterick.

The Queen was visiting the QRL in her capacity as the regiment's Colonel-in-Chief and her attendance marked its 250th continuous year of service.

Speaking after the visit, commanding officer Lt Col Martin Todd said: "We are delighted that Her Majesty The Queen agreed to honour our 250th anniversary with a visit to the regiment."



Picture: Cpl Steve Wood, RLC

School days: The efforts of Maj Sean Birchall have given youngsters in Basharan, seen greeting members of 9 Company, Welsh Guards during a vehicle patrol, the opportunity to gain an education

Officer's lessons live on

A LASTING tribute has been paid to an officer killed in Afghanistan after a new-look village school opened its doors to youngsters in Helmand province.

Maj Sean Birchall initiated the renovation project in Basharan earlier this year but died in an IED blast before it could be completed.

He led 9 Company, Welsh Guards into the village, near Lashkar Gah, in April with the aim of establishing a firm presence and driving insurgents away.

Following the operation's success the area was transformed into a thriving community and Maj Birchall and his team soon discovered that the biggest concern for locals was the lack of education for their children.

Villagers explained how the headmaster

had been executed by the Taliban and the school had fallen into a state of disrepair.

Maj Birchall promised to turn the situation around, but the guards were rocked by the tragic death of their company commander in mid-June.

His troops vowed to complete the officer's work and soldiers from 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment provided security so local workers could renovate the school, allowing more than 370 pupils to register to attend the new-look facility.

Maj Alex Corbet-Burcher, the new OC, said: "The locals were initially cautious about our presence in Basharan, but the atmosphere now is great. I think Sean would be proud of the lads' achievements. It makes us all feel better that some good has come from his sacrifice."

CGS targets modern warfare

TANKS, fast jets and fleet escorts are not a top priority and British Forces must embrace the battle for information in order to defeat the Taliban, according to the new Chief of the General Staff.

In his first speech as head of the Army, Gen Sir David Richards also told guests at Chatham House that quick successes in Afghanistan were imperative to the mission.

He said that more than 80 per cent of Afghans want their government and the international community to succeed, but at a faster pace.

"Their patience with our failure to meet the expectations of progress we ironically have done much to create is undoubtedly beginning to flag," said Gen Richards.

The former Isaf commander explained that globalisation and the rise of "non state actors" meant a need

to adapt to modern warfare was of increasing importance.

"We cannot go back to operating as we might have done ten years ago when it was still tanks, fast jets and fleet escorts that dominated the doctrine of our three Services," he continued.

"The lexicon of today is non-kinetic effects teams, counter-IED, information dominance, counter-piracy, and cyber attack and defence."

Gen Richards went on to state in no uncertain terms that the Taliban must be defeated in order to crush Al Qaeda's influence in Afghanistan.

"It is vital to our domestic security that we do not allow Afghanistan to once again become an exporter of Al Qaeda-inspired terrorism or give such people a 'victory' that could inspire a much bigger threat," he said.

● On a war footing – Pages 43-45

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- Keep the width of the peel large enough so that it will remain in one piece;
- When you reach the other end of the orange, pull the peel away in one long curl.



• Extracted from ‘BE THE BEST . . . at just about everything’ by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref ‘Soldier’.

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Hi-tech terminators

Soldier fast-forwards to the future to take a first look at next-generation military kit

He's back: Cinema's anti-hero is tipped to smash box office records with *Terminator Salvation: The Future Begins*

Picture: Richard Foreman © 2008 T Asset Acquisition Company, LLC

The blimp is back

Report: Andrew Simms

THERE is no denying that the stock of the blimp has deflated dramatically since the glory age of the airship in the early 1900s.

Once heralded as the transportation of the future and anticipated to become so popular that the art deco spire of New York's Empire State Building was originally intended as a mooring point, the airship has more recently been relegated to hovering over sporting events and advertising Goodyear tyres.

However, with the help of British expertise and at the request of the US Army, plans are under way to relaunch the military career of the blimp.

Having served as an aerial scout and primitive bomber with British, American and German forces during the two world wars, the airship is once again in vogue.

And lighter-than-air technology has already played its part in the international effort to defeat the Taliban through a state-of-the-art observation balloon boasting advanced surveillance capabilities, which is deployed several thousand feet above the Afghan capital of Kabul. Anchored at Bala Hissar, the aerostat gave coalition commanders a bird's eye view of the city – and more importantly the movements of insurgents – during August's election.

But the blue-sky thinking of the major defence contractors goes far beyond tethered balloons. Raytheon recently

unveiled its first Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS) – one of 12 helium-filled blimps being developed to provide cover for US ground forces. Equipped with radars capable of detecting threats up to 300 miles away, JLENS will be able to stay in flight for 30 days at a time and has been designed to track enemy missiles.

In turn, Lockheed Martin is building a prototype of a radar-equipped airship. Scheduled to take its maiden flight in 2012, this solar/fuel cell-powered system will operate at altitudes of 60,000ft and be

able to track cruise missiles at 600km and dismounted soldiers at 300km. It is estimated that such a near-space asset will be capable of surveying millions of cubic miles of airspace.

The company is also exploring the production of a Hybrid Unmanned Air Vehicle (HUAV). Envisaged as a means of moving equipment – and even troops – in low-threat military environments, it is anticipated that the HUAV will be able to lift loads of up to 12,000lbs at 10,000ft.

Timothy Blunck, a flight test engineer for Lockheed Martin, told *Soldier* that talk of a return to airships was more than just hot air.

"Is this old technology? Yes it is, but it is proven technology which, when combined with advancements in other fields, you can do a lot of mind-blowing stuff with," he said. "What lighter-than-air technology

gives you is a far greater degree of persistence and economical vehicles which can save on manpower.

"You can launch an airship once and forget about it, unlike smaller UAVs which you have to pull back a day or two later. With these platforms you can lift the scale and perform theatre-wide missions."

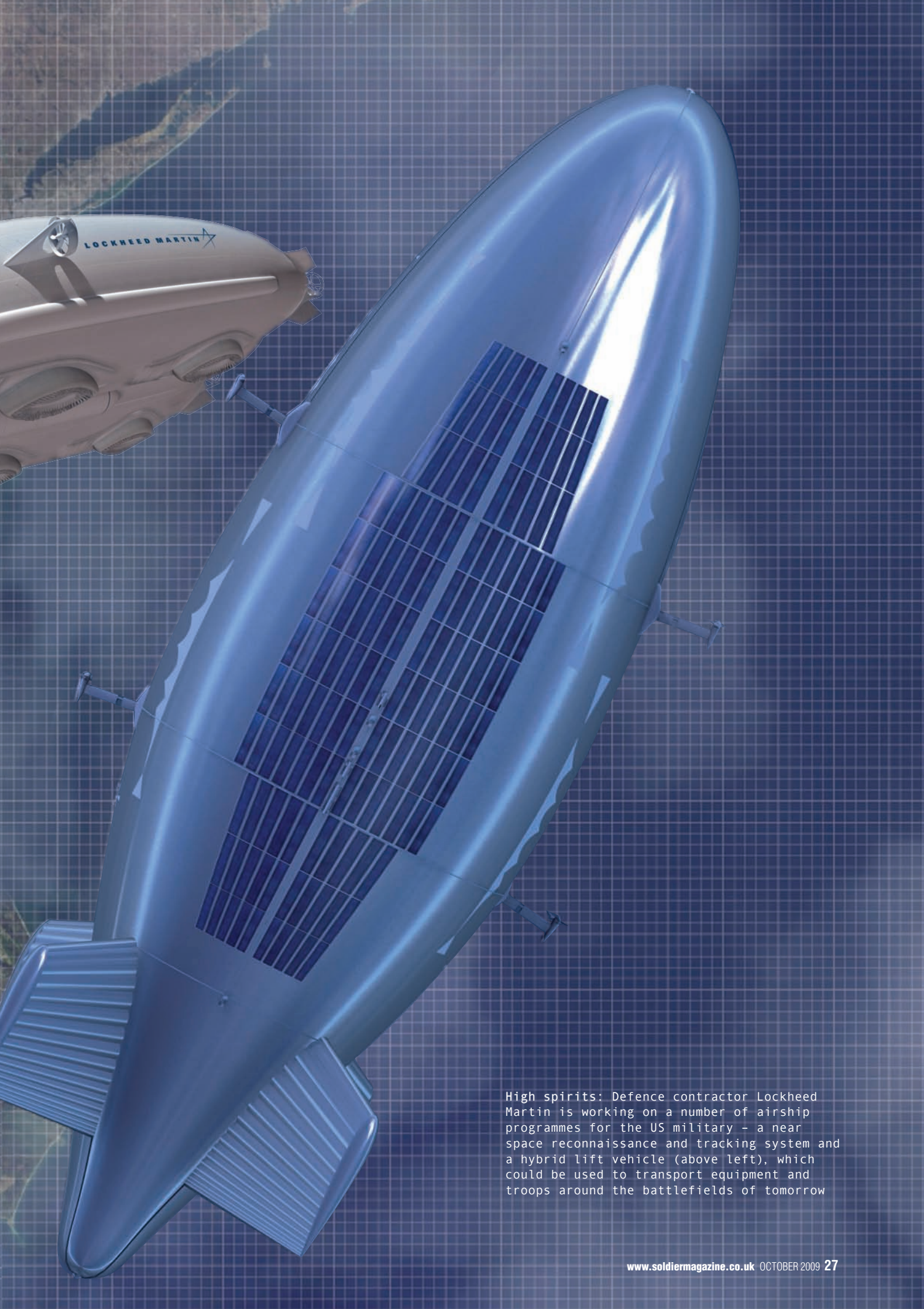
A series of high-profile accidents, such as the burning of the Hindenburg, sped the decline of airships last time round, but Blunck insisted the use of helium rather than hydrogen and advancements in durability means that the blimp bubble is unlikely to burst soon.

"There is a slight assumption of air supremacy, but for the US and UK that is not usually a problem," he added. "That said, at 60,000ft there is not a great deal of traffic or weaponry about. Even the HUAV, which would be flying at 20,000ft in a tactical scenario, would be beyond the reach of most mobile weapons."

Operating out of harm's way, blimps could soon be deployed in a host of roles not viable for fixed-wing aircraft – taking to the battlefield as either a communications relay, spy satellite, missile defence system, floating refuelling station or even a portable airstrip.

And so, while the exact flight path may not yet be known, after more than seven decades in the hangar it seems that the sky is once again the limit for the airship. ■

**'IT IS PROVEN
TECHNOLOGY
WHICH YOU CAN
DO A LOT OF
MIND-BLOWING
STUFF WITH'**



High spirits: Defence contractor Lockheed Martin is working on a number of airship programmes for the US military - a near space reconnaissance and tracking system and a hybrid lift vehicle (above left), which could be used to transport equipment and troops around the battlefields of tomorrow

Meals on wheels

US scientists develop 'drive-thru' droid

Report: Andrew Simms

WHILE operations in Afghanistan have led to a proliferation of unmanned vehicles on and above the battlefields of Helmand province, the potential advantages of robotic systems are limited by their need to constantly refuel. But what if a robot could eat on the hoof, skipping the petrol station and cookhouse in favour of living off the land?

The Energetically Autonomous Tactical Robot (EATR) is being developed to do exactly that. Inspired by nature and designed with long-range reconnaissance missions in mind, the unmanned ground vehicle will be able to find, ingest and extract energy from biomass found in its operating environment.

Currently at the proof-of-concept stage of its development, EATR will graze on vegetation using a robotic arm, multi-fingered hand and chainsaw-style cutting tool to feed its stomach – a biomass combustion chamber. The heat generated by the “digestion” of flora will power the cyber cow’s steam engine, which will in turn produce the electricity needed to keep EATR rolling.

US researchers working on the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency-sponsored project predict that 150lbs of vegetation could provide sufficient energy for 100 miles of driving.

“EATR’s appetite will really depend on its mission,” explained Dr Robert Finkelstein, president of Robotic Technology Inc, the company behind the mechanical muncher. “If it’s deployed as an observer and is stationary

then it won’t need to consume a great deal, but if it’s moving across country it will need a lot more. The module will also be able to use conventional fuel in the event of it venturing into terrain where there is nothing for it to eat, or for when the mission dictates that it is unable to stop to forage.”

Although the concept of a robot preparing its own rations is revolutionary, it is the mind behind the mouth that is truly remarkable. EATR’s framework of sensors will provide a system that boasts reactive, deliberative and creative

intelligence. This will give EATR the ability to make choices in response to environmental stimuli; predict and learn; and make appropriate choices for events that have not yet

been experienced. For example, from a chance encounter with a dustbin lorry it will learn that such entities are repositories of combustible materials and develop tactics to exploit them as energy-rich sources of fuel.

With EATR’s myriad sub-systems already being assembled and an operational prototype expected to take its first bite in 2012, the self-sufficient “snack-bot” represents a giant step forwards in the pursuit of fully autonomous vehicles.

Its emergence has also fuelled the debate

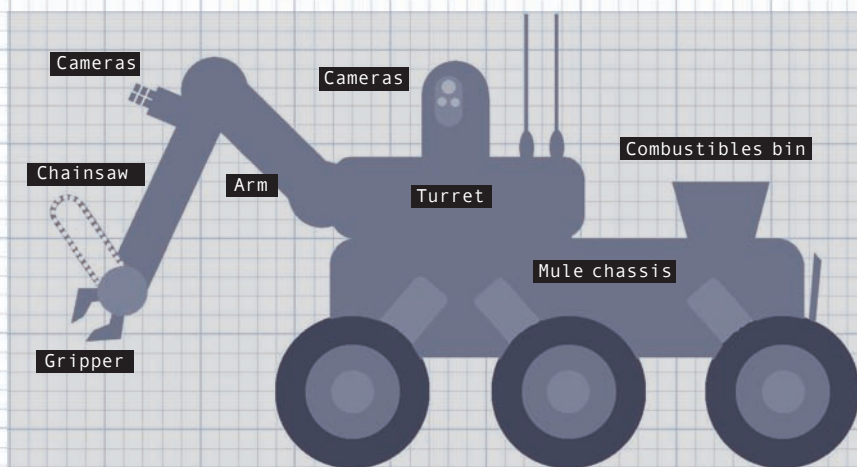
over the wisdom of putting responsibility solely in the hands of machines.

‘WE UNDERSTAND THE PUBLIC’S CONCERN ABOUT ROBOTS FEEDING ON THE HUMAN POPULATION, BUT THAT IS NOT OUR MISSION’



Cyclone Power Technologies, the brains behind EATR's engine, has already had to issue a statement denying rumours that the robot would resort to eating human flesh – the most common biological material found on a battlefield. Harry Schoell, the chief executive of Cyclone, said: "We completely understand the public's concern about futuristic robots feeding on the human population, but that is not our mission."

Dr Finkelstein was also quick to stress that EATR would be a strict vegetarian with a taste for tucker no scarier than twigs, grass clippings and wood chips. "Just like a herbivore only eats what is in its menu, EATR will only recognise vegetation as a source of energy," he told *Soldier*. "It will rely on its sensors



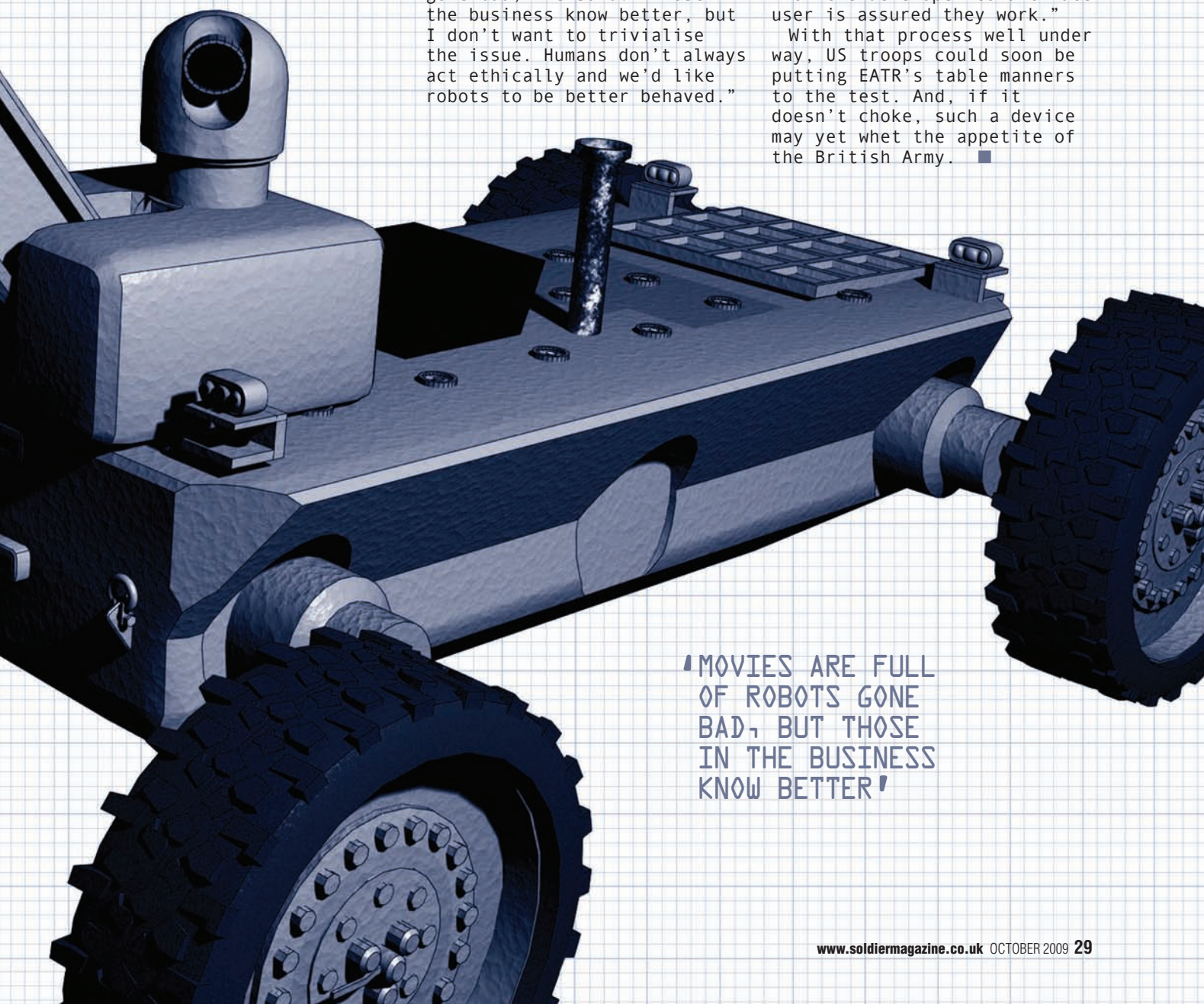
to make distinctions between what it can and cannot eat."

The roboticist did however warn that mankind should think before rushing into a world of autonomous robots as their development outpaces the ethical and legal issues surrounding their use.

"Movies are full of robots gone bad," he said. "Those in the business know better, but I don't want to trivialise the issue. Humans don't always act ethically and we'd like robots to be better behaved."

Predicting that robots will not have "free will" in the near term, Dr Finkelstein added: "Unmanned systems could behave unexpectedly but only if they're not tested properly. Making sure a system performs as it should is key and robots need to be tested to the max so that everyone from the developer to ultimate user is assured they work."

With that process well under way, US troops could soon be putting EATR's table manners to the test. And, if it doesn't choke, such a device may yet whet the appetite of the British Army. ■



'MOVIES ARE FULL OF ROBOTS GONE BAD, BUT THOSE IN THE BUSINESS KNOW BETTER'

Batteries not included

Bionic engineers take giant stride forward in race to unburden dismounted soldiers

Report: Andrew Simms

A FOOT patrol through the wadi systems of Helmand province may soon be enough to charge the raft of batteries needed by a soldier's arsenal of power-hungry gadgets.

Having set out to reduce the burden carried by dismounted troops, US and Canadian scientists are currently testing and refining a prototype device that effortlessly harvests energy from human movements.

Resembling an athletic knee brace, the Bionic Energy Harvester generates power through a process known as "generative braking", which is similar to the systems found in hybrid electric cars. Using a series of gears, the brace assists the hamstring in slowing the body just before the foot hits the floor, while simultaneously generating electricity.

"We harvest power from walking and we do it in such a way that it doesn't require extra effort on behalf of the individual using the device," explained Yad Garcha, chief executive of Bionic Power, the company

developing the innovative hi-tech harvester.

"Just as a hybrid car recovers power from the energy of braking so too does the brace - we take advantage of the negative work or 'braking' that occurs in a person's leg.

"With each stride the human body is accelerating and decelerating. The harvester gets out of the way when the leg is accelerating and

assists in the deceleration, helping the person wearing it to stop, saving them energy and producing additional power."

Working in tandem, a pair of the harvesters will passively

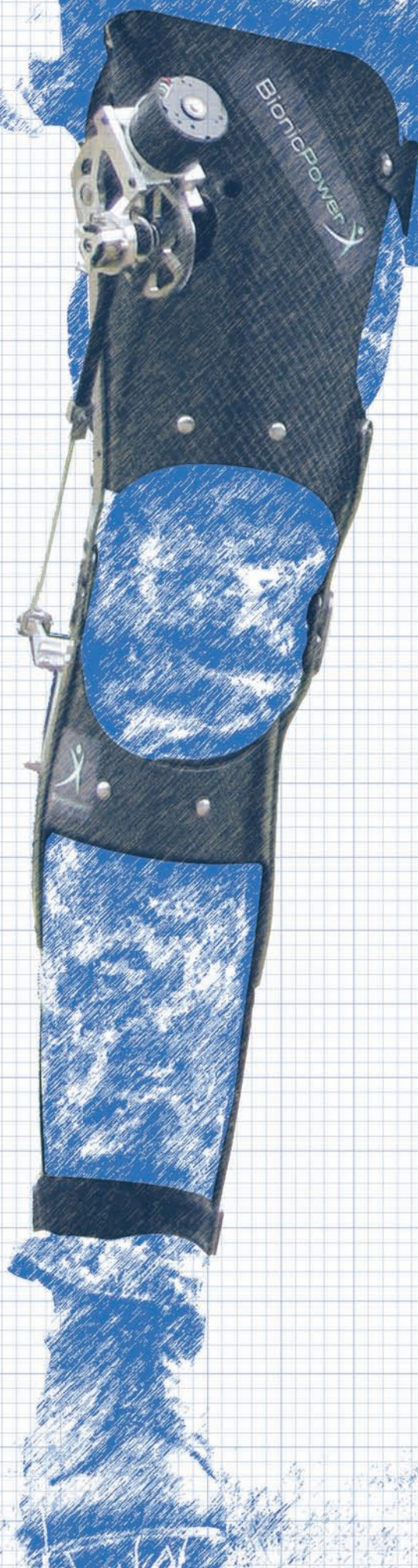
extract up to ten watts of power an hour, with two minutes of walking generating about one-and-a-half hour's worth of talk time on a mobile phone.

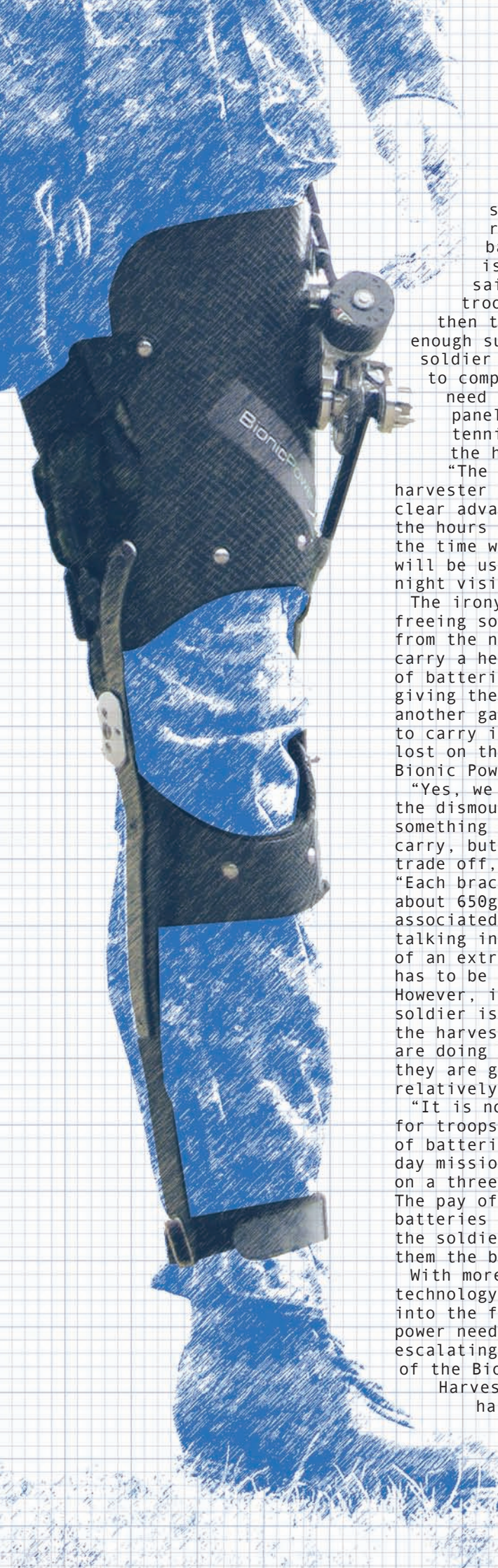
For soldiers in the field, the power could be used to charge anything from radios and GPS devices to night vision goggles.

And Garcha insists the bionic harvester - which *Time* magazine listed as one of the best inventions of 2008 - has a competitive edge over other energy-generating devices.

"Solar power is a fine

'YOU WOULD NEED TO CARRY SOLAR PANELS THE SIZE OF A TENNIS COURT TO MATCH THE HARVESTER'





solution for replenishing batteries if a unit is stationary," he said. "However, if troops are on the move then there simply isn't enough surface area on a soldier for solar devices to compete. You would need to carry solar panels the size of a tennis court to match the harvester."

"The bionic harvester also has a clear advantage during the hours of darkness, the time when soldiers will be using their night vision goggles."

The irony of freeing soldiers from the need to carry a heavy load of batteries by giving them yet another gadget to carry is not lost on the Bionic Power team.

"Yes, we are giving the dismounted soldier something else to carry, but it is a trade off," Garcha said. "Each brace weighs about 650g and with the associated wiring we're talking in the region of an extra 1.5kg that has to be carried. However, if the soldier is wearing the harvester they are doing so because they are going out for a relatively long mission."

"It is not uncommon for troops to use 10kg of batteries on a two-day mission and 13-14kg on a three-day operation. The pay off is how many batteries you can take off the soldier's back by giving them the brace."

With more and more technology finding its way into the field and the power needs of soldiers escalating, the development of the Bionic Energy

Harvester has been hastened by the lack of advancement in

battery technology. Bucking Moore's Law – a term used to describe the exponential advancements in digital electronic devices – the evolution of the battery is taking place at a crawl rather than a sprint.

"It is a chemistry that has not kept up with development," Garcha told *Soldier*. "Compared with the sophistication of devices, the capability of batteries has remained fairly flat. As technology develops it is true that devices may require less power

if the functionality remains constant, but when is that true? When was the last time the next-generation iPod came out that had the same functions as its predecessor?

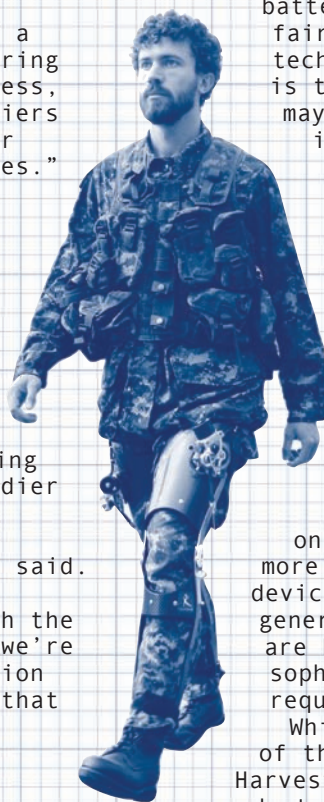
"The same is true for soldiers."

They are not only carrying more technological devices, but with each generation the devices are becoming more sophisticated and require more power."

While the prototype of the Bionic Energy Harvester is not yet ready to be dunked in the irrigation ditches of southern Afghanistan's Green Zone or dragged through sand and dust, it is far from being science fiction.

The developers plan to have the braces "ruggedised" to military specifications by the end of this year and will begin field-testing in the US and Canada in 2010.

With the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory having already expressed an interest in the device, the harvester could be helping to sustain the British Army's march towards securing lasting peace and stability in Helmand province by 2012. ■





1 Big hitter

A HUGE step-up in firepower for the British Army, the Javelin makes it into our top ten for the hi-tech edge it has given troops in southern Afghanistan. While its primary prey is armoured vehicles, the rocket – made by American firm Lockheed Martin – has been proving its worth against the Taliban, destroying bunkers and other targets it was never designed to engage. But it is its sighting system that really sets the Javelin apart. Made by Raytheon, the Command Launch Unit provides high-quality images that can seek out targets day or night. Nine out of ten soldiers already score a hit on their first attempt with the kit, but Javelin is set to get better still – technicians in the United States are now working on upgrades to enhance the weapon's range and destructive capability.



2 Distant destroyer

NICKNAMED the 60km sniper, the story of the ultra-accurate Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System was first broken by *Soldier* two years ago. Directed by GPS technology, front-line troops can call in precision attacks from these destructive devices from miles behind their lines and watch the ordnance arrive in seconds. Manufacturer Lockheed Martin now has an active programme to improve the missile's accuracy yet further. In future, engineers reckon they could make the weapon identify and hit a tank in the middle of an armoured column. Morri Leland, director of international business development with Lockheed Martin, said: "The weapon can be more effective than an air strike. It takes a minute for a bomb launched from 30,000 feet to actually hit the target."



3 Beasts of burden

WITH concern over the weight soldiers are required to carry, the latest prototype from defence firm BAE Systems could help take some of the burden from troops' shoulders. It might not look sexy, but the Multi-Operated All-Terrain Vehicle can do anything from following you with your kit on board to extracting you from a sticky situation. As well as retaining the ability to be driven like a normal vehicle, this modified version of the Supacat is a mighty mule which can be directed to stay with you, move ahead to scout an area or be summoned to your location. Richard Grover, senior scientist at BAE Systems, said: "We have been conducting a whole series of trials and this equipment has a lot of potential, from carrying your kit to providing a medical evacuation."

7 Big picture

GOOD reconnaissance is a core element of any military operation – but it has become a vital asset in Afghanistan where soldiers are fighting a shadowy insurgent enemy. Technologies such as UAVs have become invaluable, but this latest innovation from General Dynamics – which was inspired by the Tom Cruise movie *Minority Report* – is incredibly impressive. The Vesper package can be mounted on aircraft or ground vehicles and includes a suite of sensors that are used to build up a computer-generated three-dimensional model of an environment. The equipment includes a radar that can see through walls and an X-ray system to pinpoint hidden objects including IEDs. The system is linked into GPS satellites which give a global reference of any location.

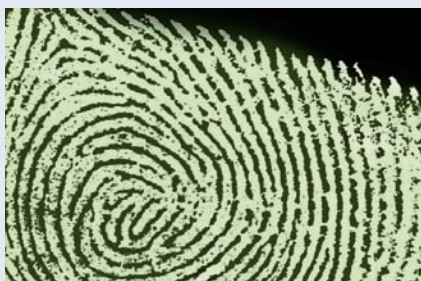
8 Medical miracle

CASUALTIES are an inevitable reality of the battle with the Taliban in Afghanistan's Helmand province. But thanks to advances in technology, injuries that would once have proved fatal are now being successfully treated. The Bulk Medical Storage Facility is one innovation that is destined to save lives. While the concept sounds simple – it is essentially a container to store blood and plasma – the reality is a complex piece of kit which can be moved to front-line forward operating bases on drops vehicles and features cold compartments regulated at the varying temperatures needed to store different products. It can also be used to keep drugs. David Sandeman, engineering manager at General Dynamics UK, said 15 of the storage facilities were en route to British Forces.

Tried and tested technology: The Mastiff vehicle, pictured being driven through the coalition operating base in Basra, Iraq, during Op Telic, has become a huge hit with troops since its first use in 2007. *Soldier* visited the Defence Systems and Equipment International show in London's Docklands to look at some of the best emerging kit

RANKED

BEST IN SHOW AT THIS YEAR'S DSEI



4 Super scanner

ONCE the sole preserve of science fiction, biometric scanning is now part and parcel of providing robust security in theatre and beyond thanks to the innovative work of British company Steria. The futuristic Biometric Data Capture System (BDCS) uses fingerprint and iris recognition to ensure that everyone entering and exiting military bases has the proper clearance. Each user has their irises and all ten fingerprints recorded onto a central computer along with a facial photograph and details such as their name and rank. The data is then transferred onto an identity card which can be logged by personnel at front gates. Currently in use at a number of forward operating bases in Helmand province, BDCS is certain to provide a solid addition to security measures wherever in the world it is deployed.



5 Flying saucer

UNMANNED Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) have proved their value in Afghanistan by providing an all-seeing-eye over areas too difficult or too treacherous for those on the ground to reach. Aircraft like the Hermes have become intelligence mainstays and now British firm AESIR is hoping to introduce a range of vertical take-off and landing unmanned systems. Circular drones such as Embla are designed to exploit the Coanda effect, an ultra-efficient air-flow principle discovered by Romanian scientist Henri Coanda. Embla measures just one-metre in diameter and contains no external moving parts, allowing it to fly up to and touch fixed objects without crashing. AESIR's systems are designed with everything from IED detection to mobile protection in mind.



6 Perfect vision

THIS much-anticipated UAV from Thales promises to offer a much-improved capability when it is unleashed in Afghanistan next year. The Watchkeeper, which can provide around-the-clock surveillance, features a raft of sensors to build an accurate picture of activity plus a radar that can see through cloud cover. The aircraft can take off and land on its own, allowing the operators to concentrate on their intelligence-gathering missions. In an interview with *Soldier*, Victor Chavez, deputy chief executive officer at Thales UK, was confident that the first UAVs will arrive in theatre in October 2010. He added: "Watchkeeper has now gone through its first full system tests with all payloads on board – these went very well."





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9 Little green box

WITH the prevalence of IEDs in southern Afghanistan, Synectic's InSight360 could prove to be a vital intelligence tool. Modelled around the same principles as black box data recorders on aircraft, the InSight360 is a small green box designed specifically for use in armoured fighting vehicles. Capable of withstanding a direct hit from an IED blast, the box pulls in data from internal and external cameras, communications systems and other sources to provide a lasting record of the moments leading up to an incident. Commanders can then analyse the information stored on the InSight360's huge hard drive and use it to plan future missions and glean vital intelligence. Using wireless network wizardry, the box can also transmit information directly from the ground to a control room to provide commanders with full, remote access and control of real-time pictures and data. Synectics claim that the InSight360's information is capable of being used for pre-mission briefings, while the video it records is tamper-proof.



10 Bug eyed

A HUMBLE parasitic fly served as the inspiration for a piece of technology designed to improve troops' night vision. Engineers at BAE Systems dissected the *Xenos Peckii*, which lives on wasps and has 50 lenses in each eye, to hone the "bug eye" device. The palm-sized gadget contains nine small lenses arranged on a curved surface to provide a 60 degree field of vision. Crucially, it is also compact and lightweight to reduce the burden on dismounted troops. Executive scientist Leslie Laycock said: "There's a requirement to reduce the size and weight of night vision goggles and to achieve a wider field of view. Night-time missions are an essential part of today's operations. The compound eyes of insects can often contain up to hundreds of thousands of tiny lenses. We didn't want to go to that level of complexity, but found the *Xenos Peckii* with 50 larger lenses provided the higher resolution and sensitivity that we required." The research into the bug eye technology was funded by the Ministry of Defence and could eventually be used in missile tracking systems.

Last month

THE CREAM OF COMBAT VIDEO GAMES

1. Call of Duty 4
2. Rainbow Six 3
3. Empire: Total War
4. Counter Strike
5. Operation Flashpoint
6. Defcon
7. Company of Heroes
8. EF 2000
9. Battlezone
10. Silent Hunter

August's *Ranked*

THE ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND'S BEST EVENTS

1. Peak performer
2. Big challenge
3. Extreme team
4. Biggest curry
5. Raise a million
6. Boxing night
7. Drum fund
8. Six days a week
9. Memorial garden
10. Food fund

July's *Ranked*

GREATEST SPORTING MOMENTS

1. Dame at the double
2. Ruck star
3. Desert oar-kid
4. Nagano nod
5. Golden gloves
6. Taylor-made move
7. Ice queen
8. Medal soldier
9. Melbourne master
10. Old man winter

June's *Ranked*

BEST BITS OF BEING AN ARMY BRIDE

1. Homecoming
2. Community
3. Travel
4. Friends
5. Children
6. Social life
7. Spring cleaning
8. Job security
9. Men in uniform
10. Absence

May's *Ranked*

TELIC TALKING POINTS

1. Is this the way
2. Arabian Knights
3. Radio gaga
4. Vote of approval
5. Lynx tragedy
6. Gardener's world
7. Great Danes
8. Top of the pops
9. Master speaker
10. Demolition day



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The
Electoral
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**Surfers on board with combat clips



★★★★★ 67 ratings

29,233 views

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Facebook

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(more share options)

▶ Statistics & Data

▶ Video Responses (0)

▼ Front-line footage reaches worldwide audience on Army's online video page Report: Richard Long

YOUTUBE has become one the biggest and best known sites on the internet thanks to its ever-expanding catalogue of videos and uploads.

With content ranging from an epic battle between lions, buffalos and crocodiles in South Africa's Kruger National Park to a bizarre rant from a Britney Spears fan, the site has something for everyone.

Its worldwide appeal has attracted an audience stretching into the millions and now the Army has tapped into the online community through its own page at www.youtube.com/user/armyweb

The site already receives in excess of 2,000 hits a day and covers all aspects of life in the Service from human interest stories to footage of new kit.

Videos are produced by the Army's mobile news teams who record exercises and events to exacting broadcast standards.

One of the most popular videos at present is *Challenger 2 in action*, which highlights the talents of the Army's main battle tank and has attracted more than 29,300 viewings in the past six months.

An earlier video capturing the Challenger 2 in Iraq has been watched 35,582 times while a video diary showcasing weapons in Afghanistan has gained a five-star rating from its 61,199 viewings.

Site administrator Claire Allen, part of the media and communications team at HQ Land Forces in Wilton, told *Soldier*: "These videos are firm favourites on the site so dominate the popular list in overall views, although some of our more recent videos are showing signs of catching them in time."

"Their appeal is their close proximity to the equipment used by troops, interviews with the soldiers themselves and the portrayal of life in Afghanistan."

The news teams are able to gain front-line footage and access to military exercises that is not afforded to other channels and the coverage is released to the wider media free of charge. It is also edited to support reports for the Army's website and YouTube page.

"The site is aimed at both Army personnel and the wider audience including ex-soldiers, families and those interested in learning more about the military," explained Allen.

"It is a news channel of exercises and events the Army is involved in – most of the material is made available to the media networks – so its audience

is broad and encompasses anyone who has an interest in news and the military's role."

The demographics of the site certainly support these claims with viewers from the UK, USA, Canada, Germany, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, France, the Netherlands and Hungary.

It also appears that there are no age barriers with visitors ranging from teenagers to old-age pensioners.

And proof that the Army's videos are rising in popularity came last month when some clips were watched nearly 6,000 times in one 24-hour period.

Allen said: "The most popular videos on the one day were

Soldier set for Miss England, an interview with LCpl Katrina Hodge who took part in the Miss England competition.

"This was followed by *Army's new combat shotgun*, which is popular in terms of comments, and the third most watched video of the day was the photo gallery from Harry Patch's funeral.

"This just goes to show the diversity of the audience and their viewing tastes." ■

“ Their appeal is their close proximity to the equipment used by the soldier ”

Report: Heidi Mines
Main picture: Graeme Main

STRETCHED out on her back, unable to move and staring up at the ceiling, Eileen Hobson quickly became accustomed to counting.

The former warrant officer kept tally of the small cracks in the walls of her room and the number of people who would enter her ward each day.

The ex-SNCO also counted footsteps but never the minutes, hours or days that she had lain bedridden at the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital (QEMH) in Woolwich.

Eileen, who completed two tours in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, had been struck down by a rare neurological disease now known as Stiff-Man Syndrome, leaving her with virtually no control over her body.

Two decades of incapacitation could crack the hardest of resolves, but Eileen refused to give in to the mental torture of knowing that her life may end in the hospital where she spent the majority of her 20 years as a patient.

Having joined the Women's Royal Army Corps at the age of 17, the fiercely fit and career-minded soldier soared through the ranks.

But on completing the Nijmegen March in 1985 she became unwell and was admitted to the QEMH for tests. Four years later she was finally diagnosed with what doctors then thought was Multiple Sclerosis and her dreams of continuing her Army career came to a screeching halt.

Eileen was transferred to Surrey's Holy Cross Hospital where her family would often visit and take her for short outings using a uniquely-designed trolley.

It was on one of these occasions that she caught sight of a golden retriever returning its owner's reading glasses after they had been dropped on the floor.

The dog was with trainers from the charity Canine Partners and the former signaller decided she

would like an animal of her own.

"If I had approached my years in hospital knowing that I was going to be in for such a long time then I would not have coped, especially as so many of the other patients left feet first," said the 58-year-old.

"I was desperate to leave the hospital and live in the community but the matron kept asking me 'why would you want to leave when you have everything you could want in here?'"

After years of physiotherapy and perseverance, the West Londoner trained herself to gain basic control over her body again. It was then that she moved into a flat and received her assistance dog, Sailor.

The talented golden retriever can load the washing machine, turn on lights, retrieve money, bank cards and receipts from ATM machines and even administer basic first aid.

Volunteers from Canine Partners train dogs to answer more than 100 commands

and to assist specific disabilities, for example helping to lift their owner's legs and untying shoelaces.

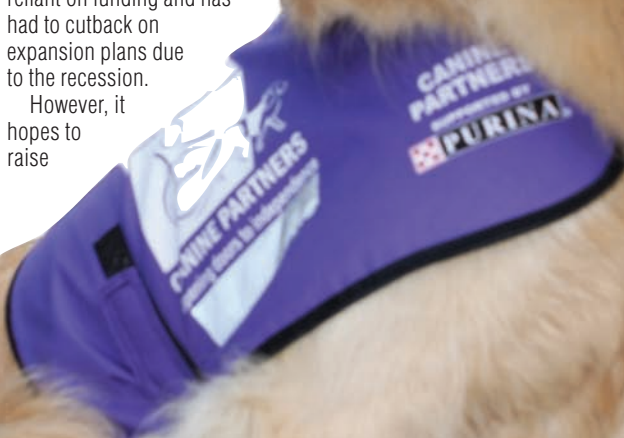
The charity is wholly reliant on funding and has had to cutback on expansion plans due to the recession.

However, it hopes to raise

more awareness and money by appealing to the public to sponsor a puppy for £1 a week or to take part in other fundraising events.

Speaking to *Soldier* from Canine Partners' headquarters in West Sussex, dog trainer Becca Meaton explained that there is a lack of knowledge about what the charity can provide, particularly within the Service community.

'Sailor hasn't only made a difference to my life - he has given me a life'



Animal magic: From Service to civvy street, dogs have played a leading role in the life of Eileen Hobson

Pictures: Courtesy of Eileen Hobson

She added: "The dogs can compensate for such a lot and young dynamic people such as injured soldiers could gain so much from them.

"They can assist with stress and trauma and bring comfort to those suffering from post traumatic stress disorder as research has shown the dogs have enormous psychological benefits for their owners.

"Eileen is by no means an isolated case for the charity and many of the 140 individuals we have successfully placed dogs with have incredible stories of rehabilitation and improvements to their quality of life."

The charity is now appealing to soldiers and their families to get in touch if they want to know more about assistance dogs. They would also like volunteers to help mentor puppies for two years before they are taken to the headquarters for intensive training.

Although Eileen's days of commanding troops are in the past, she still follows the Army's commitments in Afghanistan and believes that the strong resolve instilled in her by the Service can help her to overcome anything.

She added: "Do not believe anyone that tells you that you cannot do anything. The medical teams told me that I'd never get better and I should have passed away 20 years ago, but look at me now.

"I really hope that some of the disabled soldiers will decide to look into the possibility of having a canine partner. Sailor hasn't only made a difference to my life – he has given me a life." ■



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Heroes' heroes

Rugby idols heap praise on Britain's real role models

Report: Joe Clapson

ENGLAND Rugby Union superstars took time out before an intense training session to meet up with injured and disabled Army personnel.

But rather than play the role of celebrities signing autographs for the awe-struck Servicemen and women, the top-level players were themselves humbled.

The most famous England number ten of all time, World Cup winner Jonny Wilkinson, said it was a privilege to meet members of the Armed Forces at Twickenham.

"To be in the same room as those guys absolutely made my day," he told *Soldier*.

"What they do is heroic and it's an honour to speak to them."

The England and Toulon player – most famous for his last minute drop goal in the 2003 World Cup final victory over Australia – also heaped praise on the Army as a whole.

"I think the Army is incredible. The boys are geniuses," he said.

The highbrow lunch meeting with the players took place prior to an open training session under the watchful eye of England coach Martin Johnson and thousands of cheering fans.

The event formed part of the celebrations for Twickenham's centenary year.

Present at the exclusive get-together of players and military personnel was LCpl Phil Tubevu (RLC) who is currently based at Headley Court receiving treatment for a blood clot on the brain.

"The day at Twickenham was something I had been really looking forward to – it was marvellous," he said.

"I am an openside flanker when I play and I

got injured in May last year when I got kicked in the head during a game.

"I'm a big rugby fan, so it was a great experience to be able to talk to the England players. It was a wonderful day."

Back-row powerhouse Joe Worsley was also in the room seeking out Army personnel.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, the Wasps blindside said: "There's been a big switch in the public attitude towards the Army in the last few years and I'll do what I can to back the soldiers."

The 6ft 5in colossus, who recently returned from the British and Irish Lions tour of South Africa, added: "It's good to be able to help out by having the Army guys at Twickenham."

"It's an honour to host these soldiers who have served our country."

LCpl Jeremy Fletcher (RE), who suffered brain damage after collapsing on parade, was also more than happy to share a sandwich with the country's best players.

"It was fantastic to be able to meet the international players – even if I am more of a football fan than a rugby fan," he said. "It was really nice for the England players to take the time to talk and listen to me."

"Days like this are really good for bringing injured soldiers like myself back into things. It's all very well being at Headley Court, but days out are a break from the norm and allow us to enjoy ourselves."

But young fly-half sensation Danny Cipriani insisted it was the Servicemen and women that should be put on a pedestal.

"These people are the genuine heroes and we are very proud of them," he said.

One man who made the most of his day with the rugby idols was Pte Derek Derenalagi (2 Mercian) who lost both of his legs in 2007 when his vehicle hit a mine in Helmand.

The ex-rugby player explained that meeting

the England stars helped boost morale and raise awareness for injured Army personnel.

"Meeting these players has been awesome," he said. "An occasion like this is amazing for us soldiers and helps raise the profile of charities like Help for Heroes."

Pte Derenalagi has picked himself up since his devastating injury and has set himself some astonishing goals.

"I am back at work and currently training for the 2012 Paralympics. I am training for the shot put, discus and javelin," said the Fiji-born soldier.

"I am focusing on winning more than one gold medal in 2012 – I can learn a lot from the professionalism of the England players." ■

Picture, right:
Leo Wilkinson





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On a war footing

New CGS puts ops in focus

Picture: Steve Dock

Interview: Cliff Caswell and Tom Binns

IF ANYONE understands the complexity of the task facing British soldiers squaring up to the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, it is Gen Sir David Richards.

Back in 2006, the charismatic officer took the helm of Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) as the country's government began extending its influence into the southern provinces. Under his overall command, 16 Air Assault Brigade deployed to Helmand, heralding the dawn of Op Herrick and a struggle with the Taliban that has since claimed the lives of more than 200 British soldiers.

Three years later, however, the new Chief of the General Staff is in no doubt about the need to see the task through in Afghanistan. While acknowledging that the state will potentially need the helping hands of the international community for some years to come, he disagrees with those who think involvement in Afghanistan is discretionary and insists that the consequences of failure would be catastrophic.

"If we surrender even the south of the country to the Taliban, Al Qaeda will be straight back and you are going to have a very angry population who will feel betrayed by the West," Gen Richards told *Soldier* during his first media interview as CGS. "Most people do not want the Taliban back – they are brutal oppressors.

"Giving up would create resentment and provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. It would also have an intoxicating effect on militant Islam throughout the world because of the perceived defeat of Nato, the UK and the USA. So I think we need to hold our nerve and make sure we deliver on our promises."

As the stakes are so high in Afghanistan, Gen Richards believes it is essential that the British public understand the importance of the mission. And, having declared that the Army is now fully on a war footing with all efforts geared towards supporting current

operations, he is committed to making sure the message is spelt out loud and clear.

He emphasised that British troops were taking part in the Isaf mission alongside 42 other nations, with the prime reason to help safeguard UK national security. But they were also assisting a democratically-elected government and helping to train their counterparts in the Afghan security forces so they could ultimately deal with any troublemakers themselves.

The senior officer, who took over as head of the Army from Gen Sir Richard Dannatt at the beginning of September, certainly has a wealth of experience. The archetypal soldier's soldier, he has been on operations all over the world in a career spanning nearly 40 years and has earned the respect of all ranks for his leadership acumen and approachable manner.

Having originally commissioned as a gunner in 1971, Gen Richards' raft of posts have included a spell as CO of the 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery and commander of 4th Armoured Brigade in Germany. He has also headed up the Nato Allied Rapid Reaction Corps force, been Commander-in-Chief Land Forces and seen action from the streets of Northern Ireland to the Asian island of East Timor.

"There have obviously been huge changes in the world since I have been in the Army," he said. "When I joined, the Cold War was at its height and we were focused on a potential conflict with the Soviet Union, which we took seriously.

"Who would have believed that 40 years later we would be conducting a major operation in Afghanistan? But we are managing it well and my job now is to make sure we continue to have the fine reputation we have always enjoyed."

While getting it right in Afghanistan is

at the top of the agenda, Gen Richards is determined to fight to ensure the Army is properly resourced for the job as well as any future challenges.

His early priorities have included focusing efforts on countering the menace of the Taliban's IED campaign against both soldiers and Afghan civilians – which has claimed a number of lives – as well as bringing more armoured vehicles online. He is confident that the MoD is properly focused on the campaign and welcomed the Secretary of State's recent confirmation that it is the Department's main effort.

"Afghanistan was always going to be a long haul. You only have to look at Northern Ireland and Malaya to see that the history of counter-insurgency campaigns is that you cannot be successful in the short-term," he said. "Our direction now is to build up the Afghan National Army (ANA) and police, which means it will be hard for the next two-to-five years as we shoulder the brunt of the fighting.

"Thereafter the operation will have evolved to one in which we are supporting

"I think we need to hold our nerve and make sure we deliver on our promises"

“ . . . it is essential the British public understand the importance of the mission ”

- WE are in Afghanistan to help safeguard UK national security
- BRITAIN, along with 42 other nations, is helping the democratically-elected Afghan government to build a safe and secure environment for the people of Afghanistan
- THE British Army is providing local security to the local population and training the Afghan Army and Police so that they can ultimately take over this responsibility



the ANA and we would hope to have reduced the level of fighting within that period. To this end we are all focused on operations and, for those in the Armed Forces, deciding that something is your main effort has a huge impact.”

In taking the fight to the Taliban, Gen Richards believed that British soldiers were living up to their trademark phrase of being the best. And he shared the gratitude shown by the nation’s public for the dedication and sacrifice they had made.

“I once spent some time in the West Indies, where I first heard the term ‘maximum respect’,” he added. “And that is what I have – maximum respect for our people. To be asked to be their boss while they are in a war is incredibly humbling, and I will be fighting hard for both them and their families.

“So, a huge thank you to the Army, as well as those in the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines who are part of our team. I am confident that we will come through all this with our amazing reputation not only intact, but shining.” ■

Failure is not an option: Gen Richards, pictured right, is adamant that success in Afghanistan is vital to UK security

Picture: Cpl Adrian Harlen RLC

Helping hands: Chinook helicopters approach troops from 3 Scots during Operation Tyruna in the Sangin Valley, Afghanistan

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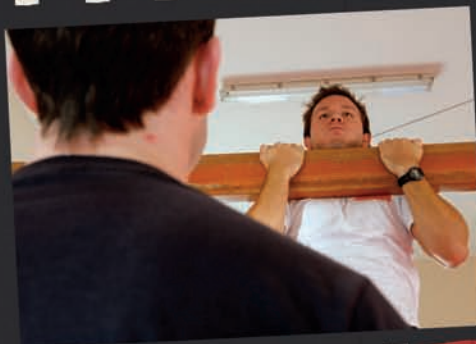
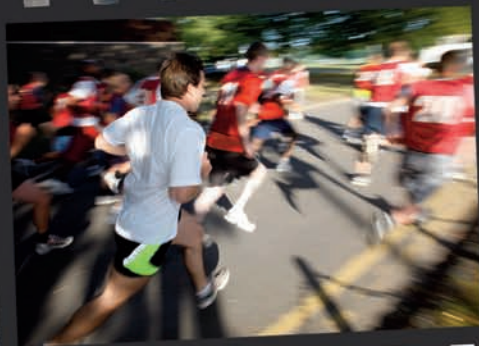
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G.I. JOE

Clapson put to the test as *Soldier* takes a closer look at Development and Selection



PASSED

ARMY 5 SOLDIER 5

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

If you talk, you're on your way home. These were the first words I heard from the white-vested PTI as I lined up for the warm-up ahead of a 1.5-mile run at the Army Development Selection Centre (ADSC).

From the moment I arrived at Pirbright Barracks at 0700, it became clear that no step or action would go unmonitored during the Army's recruitment process.

Discipline, confidence and responsibility were words continuously mentioned as key attributes a successful candidate would possess. Failure to demonstrate such qualities would ultimately mean failure.

Armed with my running shorts,

trainers and a T-shirt, I was ready to take on the energy-sapping and mind-challenging tasks set out for candidates who have signed up to undergo selection.

The group I joined had already taken a full medical, a Physical Standards Selection for Recruits (PSSR) test and an "ice-breaker" in which each person tells their peers and the selection officers about themselves and why they want to join up.

"I'm not very good at talking in front of large groups," was a common remark. But as one selection officer said: "That's not much use when you need to give orders in a life or death situation."

As I filed in at the back of the crowd of runners, the murmuring began.

"He wasn't here yesterday. Maybe he's checking on us," came the whispers.

Amid an environment of apprehension and panic I plodded along the route while the PTI made promises to his subjects.

"The next person to speak will be kicked off selection and on the next train home," he said. Silence followed.

Next up were two laps of a simple circuit. Any prospective recruit unable to finish in less than 14min 30sec would fail. Those with aspirations of joining The Parachute Regiment needed to be home in 9min 18sec or less.

At the PTI's bark, we were off and I backed my judgement that those in front mimicking Usain Bolt would be reduced to slow joggers by the second corner.

Halfway round, and with about ten contenders in front of me, I decided to kick on and end the pain for my heavy, non-cooperative legs. I finished in 9min 35sec.

An order to blast out 20 press-ups was then given – some candidates had failed to line up in the correct order. This was to be an

enduring theme throughout the day.

With barely any chance to catch my breath I found myself attempting as many straight arm "heaves" as possible for the PSSR.

"Lower yourself until your arms are straight," said the relaxed PTI. "Then pull yourself above the beam. Then back down."

Easy when you're the one reciting the rubrics, not hanging by your fingernails, I thought. I managed nine before being strapped into a harness for the back extension test, which gauged my ability to carry kit on my back. I scored 115.2kg.

These tests were all relevant to real-life situations. Weak soldiers would be a burden on others in an operational environment.

Without too much chance for a breather – a short ten seconds – I was soon gripping a bar and tackling the static strength test. I scored 152kg and was swiftly told it was "worse than it should be".

The dynamic strength lift was next. Anyone who cannot press 55kg is immediately failed. Luckily, I made the grade.

Then, with the salty product of my perspiration stinging my eyes, I progressed to the 150m "jerrycan carry". Fortunately, I had reached the finish line before the two 20kg containers slipped out of my greasy palms.

After necking a cup of tea, it was on to the team task arena.

"Some of you seem to forget that this is a job interview," bellowed a selection officer.

Yet again some of the group had been talking. So all of us had to sprint to the goal post (100m) and back, then leopard crawl over the woodland area (50m).

Then someone spoke again. So we ran, then crawled, again. Then someone quietly voiced their discontent. So we ran, then crawled, again.

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14.00 OR LESS

ARMY FOUNDATION COLLEGE (AFC (H))
14.30 OR LESS



Now covered in scratches and with my ears caked in dust, I joined the queue to carry out the grenade throwing.

The task was to crawl under a net, pick up and throw a grenade and shout "grenade", at which everyone had to dive to the floor.

To my bemusement, a minority took issue with these simple instructions.

"Do we have to hit the floor every time someone shouts grenade?," asked one irked 21-year-old.

I found solace in the fact that anyone who "didn't want to get muddy" and caused everyone else to do press-ups would not be scoring highly with the selection officer.

Battered and bruised by the repeated orders to hit the stone-covered ground, the interviewees and I were split into four groups and sent to our team tasks.

"You are on one side of a river. The bridge has broken. You need to get your ammunition and yourself to the other side. Go," was the general gist of things.

This was a chance for candidates to show leadership, responsibility and the ability to work in a team.

For my part, I managed to get hit on the head with a plank, tie myself up in trip-wire, and forget what the second mission was when asked by LSgt Andy Devlin (IG).

On heading back to hang up our coveralls at the end of the day, the difference in calibre and attitude of the candidates was summed up perfectly in one conversation.

"I need to have a look at the extent of my injuries, I feel really sore. How can you do that for 16 weeks?," said one.

"If you can't do it, don't join," was another

potential recruit's response.

Next, I sat in on the discussion process, which precedes the individual candidate interviews. I found that nobody slips through the net.

Roughly 200 candidates a week go for selection and between 50 and 75 fail.

"We only need to take the best," said Maj Ed Ross (RDG).

I approached Sgt Ian Gillard with some trepidation to find out my fate. Did my test results stack up? Was there a line through my name? "You passed as Para," said the SNCO.

It may be the first physical and mental challenge facing any would-be soldier, but despite having passed I can say that selection is anything but basic. ■

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Picture: Sgt Chris Halton RLC

Report: Cliff Caswell

THE bravery of men and women receiving the latest round of gallantry awards helped bring a new sense of optimism to war-torn areas of the world, a senior officer has said.

Addressing medal winners and their families at a ceremony in Plymouth, Second Sea Lord, VADM Sir Alan Massey paid tribute to the heroic actions of soldiers, sailors and aircrew who had taken part in tours of Iraq and Afghanistan.

And he added that everyone could be proud of their extraordinary achievements which were “characterised by immense gallantry and distinguished service”.

The latest clutch of operational honours include several Military Crosses, one of which was bestowed on WO2 Ben Kelly (PWRR), who put himself in the line of fire to recover the body of a fallen comrade during an operation in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan.

Other decorations were presented

to Lt Col Joe Cavanagh, CO of 2 Rifles, whose conduct on Op Herrick earned him a Distinguished Service Order and Brig Alexander Storrie who received a CBE for his work with Allied forces and Arab counterparts in Iraq.

VADM Massey added: “The men and women before me range from those who provided inspirational leadership to those who showed exceptional gallantry with little regard for your own safety – you all have your own experience to tell of what it means to be on operations.”

“It is now for us to continue to support our deployed troops – failure to do so in

Afghanistan would deal a serious blow to what we are doing there and hand a victory to violent extremism.

“We cannot underestimate the scale of the task, which will take time, steadfastness and continued courage to achieve.”

On Op Herrick, VADM Massey highlighted that troops had successfully been driving Taliban fighters from areas “devastated by decades of conflict, civil war and neglect”.

In Iraq, British personnel had been able to withdraw from theatre after six years of operations that had helped to bring about a sharp fall in the level of violence.

VADM Massey concluded that success on current operations was now the priority for all three Services. “The heroes here today deserve nothing less,” he concluded.



● INTELLIGENCE-gathering capabilities in southern Afghanistan were significantly bolstered by an officer's expertise with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).



● Maj Nathan Webber

Maj Nathan Webber of the Royal Artillery was instrumental in bringing together different aircraft in theatre and coordinating a new drive to keep tabs on Taliban movements.

Now his work in the field, which he led "by personal example and deploying considerable experience and knowledge to great effect", has been rewarded with the MBE.

Maj Webber told *Soldier* that British experience with UAVs had developed to a sophisticated level in a short space of time and hundreds of flying hours were being clocked up.

He said that his tour in southern Afghanistan had been "extremely rewarding", adding: "All of the guys thoroughly enjoyed what was a real team effort."

● A SENIOR officer has dedicated a top-level award to his soldiers, praising them for their outstanding work and achievements while on tour in volatile southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Joe Cavanagh, commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, said that the award of the Distinguished Service Order was the result of "the hard work of the whole battlegroup".

The CO received the accolade for his outstanding achievements on Op Herrick. His citation reads: "Throughout a hugely challenging period he led his wide-spread, isolated and vulnerable force with courage and determination."

But speaking to *Soldier*, Lt Col Cavanagh was keen to focus attention on his troops, two of whom had been awarded the Military Cross for their actions under fire.

He added: "The DSO is an amazing award but it says more about what the riflemen achieved than me – this is about the hard work of the whole battlegroup."



Battlegroup honours: Pictured left to right, A/Sjt Mark Powis MC (2 Rifles) with his CO, Lt Col Joe Cavanagh DSO, at the award ceremony at HQ 3 Commando Brigade in Plymouth

Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

Background picture: A 116-vehicle convoy en-route to resupply troops in Sangin district

Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer RLC

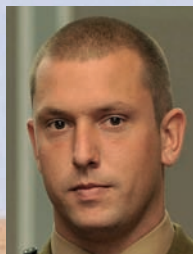


● A JUNIOR NCO ignored his own serious injuries to carry on treating casualties wounded during a firefight with insurgents in southern Afghanistan.

LCpl Sean Keenan, of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, had been on a joint patrol with the Afghan National Army as part of an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team when they were ambushed by Taliban fighters in Sangin district, Helmand province.

Despite taking shrapnel in an arm and leg, LCpl Keenan continued to treat three fellow soldiers. He also averted disaster, managing to dispose of a phosphorous grenade that had ignited when a bullet smashed into his personal kit.

LCpl Keenan's courageous approach to his duty – putting his own life on the line to



● LCpl Sean Keenan

save others despite being wounded and in pain – was rewarded with the prestigious Military Cross.

The NCO told *Soldier*. “During the ambush we had tried to extract from the killing area but there had been more casualties, so we had to sit tight for a little while.

“It was a wild fight. I was treating the wounded and returning fire. When I was hit by the shrapnel I remember thinking it was a massive bonus that my arm was still there.”

LCpl Keenan's citation praised his bravery and methodical approach to his job under extreme duress, which had “a direct effect” on the security of his team.

The citation added: “His patrol suffered three casualties – despite being injured he commenced treating them. When a phosphorous grenade was ignited by a bullet striking his equipment inflicting further personal injuries, he recognised the dangers, removed the burning equipment and continued to fight on.”

● AN officer who fearlessly used his bayonet after running out of ammunition has been awarded a Military Cross.

The citation for Lt James Adamson (Scots) praised the 24-year-old's “supreme physical courage” during the incident in southern Afghanistan.

It added: “The calm leadership he continued to display after such a bloody experience was of the very highest order.”



● Lt James Adamson

● A BOMB disposal expert who took on a relentless workload during a punishing operation in Afghanistan has been rewarded with the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

A/WO2 John Lester of the Royal Logistic Corps was singled out for his ability to operate under “intense pressure” while working alongside the Afghan National Army and multinational troops from across Nato in Gereshk.

In an interview with *Soldier*, A/WO2 Lester said a number of IEDs had been neutralised during the operation, which was carried out to refurbish vehicle checkpoints.

He added: “The pressure you are under

as an Improvised Explosive Device Disposal operator is no different to any other pressure that you are likely to encounter. You want to achieve a safe environment for your soldiers.

A/WO2 Lester's citation shows that the NCO played a vital role in theatre. The document states: “His leadership was one of the factors leading to the operation's



● A/WO2 John Lester

● A SOLDIER who tore across open ground under a hail of bullets to rescue a wounded friend has told of how a mixture of adrenalin and training kicked in.

Gnr Grant Guy of the Royal Artillery managed to administer first aid to his comrade before picking out enemy positions and calling in fire on them.

His actions during the contact in Afghanistan earned the artilleryman the Military Cross and praise for his crucial role in the intense firefight.

“When you are in a situation like that all your senses are so much more heightened and you tend to react a lot faster,” Gnr Guy said. “You are also in a big family in the Army, and you don't like to see other family members getting hurt.”

The soldier's citation said: “Following an ambush he displayed a complete disregard for his own safety, dashing across open ground to reach an injured comrade to administer first aid. He then identified enemy positions, enabling the direction of accurate fire which was to prove pivotal in tipping the battle in favour of the patrol.”



● Gnr Grant Guy



success and his actions were key in galvanising a coordinated response to an IED strike.

“Despite the appalling conditions and the attrition of regular combat, he has instilled in his entire command his irrepressible enthusiasm, energy and determination.

“Resolute in defence, tenacious and courageous in attack he has set an outstanding example to his company.”

● A SENIOR NCO who moved to close down an enemy compound despite suffering a shrapnel wound has received the Military Cross for his heroic actions.

Sgt Torben Sorensen (pictured below left), serving with 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, assaulted the Taliban position with a colleague, refusing medical attention until he was sure all the insurgent fighters had been routed.

The soldier, who was in hospital when he was told that he was to receive the award, generously dedicated his MC to everyone he had served alongside in southern Afghanistan.

The day of Sgt Sorensen's medal-winning actions began with an attack on his patrol base in Garmsir, after which soldiers moved to strike the Taliban.

Coming under intense small arms fire from a compound, Sgt Sorensen and a comrade became separated from the rest of B Company Group.

They moved to hit back at the enemy, but the SNCO was wounded in the leg by shrapnel from a grenade.

"I knew I was hurt but I had to carry on," he told *Soldier*. "We had to clear the threat, which meant that we had to think and act quickly. We had taken a massive amount of fire and I wanted to stop the enemy from hurting my friends. That's why I did what I did – it was about not letting my people down.

"It is an honour to receive the Military Cross, but it is for all the guys – this is a fantastic battalion and I am proud to be a part of it. We all worked hard on tour."

The SNCO's citation paid tribute to his courage, self-sacrifice and dedication to his colleagues. The commendation reads: "Sgt Sorensen incurred a 12-inch shrapnel wound but continued to move through the compound until he was sure all the enemy had fled before allowing himself to be treated by a team medic."

● A WOUNDED junior NCO showed "decisive leadership" in bravely fighting back against a vicious Taliban ambush that threatened the lives of both him and his colleagues.

LCpl Colin Spooner of 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (pictured below centre), had deployed to Garmsir in Helmand province when his patrol came under fire from an insurgent force twice their strength.

But the NCO's clear thinking under pressure – and refusal to be carried out of the battle zone despite serious injuries – earned him the coveted Military Cross.

"As a result of the fire we were taking, we had to revert to a defensive role," recalled LCpl Spooner in an interview with *Soldier*. "I was running across open ground when an improvised explosive device detonated and I realised I'd been quite badly hurt.

"While I was being treated for the injury I tried to keep the fire going and when we were finally able to extract from the situation I knew it was going to take four blokes to carry me on a stretcher – I didn't want to take them out of the battle."

LCpl Spooner admitted he was stunned to have received a decoration for his part in the action. "To be honest I was shocked – it's taken a couple of days to sink in," he added.

Despite his surprise at the award, commanders were in no doubt that the NCO's bravery had helped save lives. His citation states: "Spooner's decisive action, exemplary leadership and courage as a section commander with B Company Group contributed enormously to the successful outcome of a difficult situation.

"His outstanding contribution took place despite extraordinarily dangerous circumstances and the pain that resulted from the shrapnel wounds he received."

● A COURAGEOUS senior NCO has spoken of the "bittersweet" feeling he experienced when he was told he was being awarded the Military Cross for recovering the body of a colleague.

WO2 Ben Kelly, of the 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (pictured below right), put himself in mortal danger to retrieve WO2 Gaz O'Donnell, a bomb disposal expert who had been killed while trying to make an IED safe in Afghanistan.

WO2 Kelly's citation emphasised how the senior soldier had acted selflessly to retrieve the body of his colleague and help clear the area for Nato personnel.

But while the SNCO said he was honoured to be awarded the MC, he

admitted that there were harrowing memories of the day WO2 O'Donnell was killed.

The bomb disposal expert, whose work had saved many lives throughout his exceptional career, had again put himself at mortal risk to

help make an area safe for his comrades. He was posthumously awarded a bar to his George Medal for his actions that day.

WO2 Kelly, who was based near Garmsir, Helmand province, during his Op Herrick tour, told *Soldier*: "It is very bittersweet for me, but it goes to show that, if somebody is wounded, we will move heaven and earth to get them out of harm's way. In the same way, we will not leave the body of one of our comrades.

"This Military Cross is not just recognition for me, but a whole company of guys. It is poignant that, when I receive the medal, it will be a year to the day the event happened."

Tenacious Tigers: Pictured left to right, Sgt Torben Sorensen MC, LCpl Colin Spooner MC and WO2 Ben Kelly MC of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

‘The Military Cross is not just recognition for me, but a whole company of guys’



● AN accomplished and highly-respected senior officer has been rewarded for his “defining” work in Iraq by becoming a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

Brig Alexander Storrie, late The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, received the accolade for his work during “a pivotal time for Basra and the UK’s strategic goals” while he was in command of 7th Armoured Brigade on Op Telic 12.

The monumental tour last year came in the wake of the Iraqi Army-led Charge of the Knights operation, during which stability was restored to Basra.

Seizing the initiative, Brig Storrie threw his energies into making sure counterparts in the Iraqi security forces received a boost in mentoring in a move that began paving the way for the eventual drawdown of Op Telic earlier this year.



● Brig Alexander Storrie

During an interview with BFBS TV during the tour, Brig Storrie said his troops had risen well to the challenge. He added: “Everybody has forgotten their cap badge and ego, has gone downtown and has been trying to make a difference.”

The brigadier’s award citation reads: “Brig Storrie demonstrated outstanding conviction and judgement – creating a strong bond with his Arab counterparts and widely acknowledged by our allies, his contribution to improvements in security was immense.

“Calm under pressure, he led his brigade with stamina, making an exemplary difference to the lives of ordinary Baswaris during an exemplary and highly defining tour.”

Background picture, Tower of strength: One of the RE-built sangers at the Contingency Operating Base, Basra, Iraq

Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

● THE commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, has spoken of his satisfaction at the successful conclusion of the Iraq mission after he was awarded an OBE for his part in the six-year operation.

Lt Col Simon Browne was adamant that Op Telic had ultimately brought the desired result, and that British troops had left the country in a far better state than it had been in when they arrived.

In his citation, the CO of the Poachers was praised for his outstanding leadership in helping to transform Iraqi troops into a fighting force. The document added: “Rising to myriad challenges, he has set the standard for future operations.”

In an interview, Lt Col Browne paid tribute to his soldiers for quickly adapting to a new mentoring role during their tour with 7th Armoured Brigade last year, which came in the wake of the Iraqi-led Charge of the Knights action to drive insurgents from Basra.

Seizing the initiative, they helped their Middle East counterparts consolidate their success, building confidence and ultimately paving the way for the British drawdown.

Lt Col Browne said: “It was a very different situation to our tour on Op Telic 8, when we were based in Basra Palace and we came under mortar fire several times a day.

“I had the opportunity to see Basra at both its worst and its best, and what we have achieved there certainly feels like success to me. I’m pleased with my award but it is for the whole battalion and recognises the hard work of the soldiers.”

His citation added: “In shouldering the greatest risks alone time after time, his conduct during the tour was the epitome of professionalism and personal bravery.” ■



● Lt Col Simon Browne



Operational honours and awards

Afghanistan

Distinguished Service Order (DSO): Lt Col Joseph Desmond CAVANAGH, Rifles

Officer of the Order of The British Empire (OBE): Brig Mark Julian HALLAS ADC, late Intelligence Corps; Lt Col Alan Stewart RICHMOND, QDG

Member of the Order of The British Empire (MBE): Capt Brian Headrige CALDER, RLC; WO2 Simon James William HALL, RLC; Maj Michael George TAYLOR, RLC; Maj Nathan Charles WEBBER, RA; Maj Colin Neil WITHERS, 4 Para

Military Cross (MC): Lt James Philip ADAMSON, Scots; Capt Xavier Luke GRIFFIN, 4 Para; Gnr Grant Michael GUY, RA; LCpl Sean Michael KEENAN, Rifles; WO2 Benjamin Llewellyn KELLY, PWRR; A/Sjt Mark John POWIS, Rifles; LCpl Gajendra RAI, RGR; Sgt Torben Erik George SORENSEN, PWRR; LCpl Colin James SPOONER, PWRR

Queen's Gallantry Medal (QGM): WO2 Colin Robert George GRANT, RLC; A/WO2 John Gareth LESTER, RLC; SSgt Anthony David SPAMER, RE

Mention in Despatches (MiD): Capt Rupert Timothy ANDERSON, RGR; Cfn Martin BANKS, REME; Capt Alex John BURGESS MC, PWRR; Capt James Alexander CARROLL, QDG; Rfn Darshan CHAMLING RAI, RGR; Maj Ross James DAINES, RGR; Rfn Manju GURUNG, RGR; Spr Peter Joseph HEMBRY, RE; Capt Daniel Paul HOLLOWAY, Yorks; Lt Edward Richard HUNTER, PWRR; Capt Pieter Alexander LAHORGUE, RLC; Rfn Christopher Philip LOCKE, Rifles; Capt James Edward Michael MCCARTHY, Rifles; Rfn Stuart Winston NASH, Rifles (Killed In Action); A/Sgt Nicholas James NESBIT, Rifles; Bdr Paul James QUAINANCE, RA; Cpl Basanta RAI, RGR; Sgt Bikash RAI, RGR; Cpl Bishwahang RAI, RGR; Rfn Gopal RAI, RGR; Lt Drew Steven REED, PWRR; Capt Thomas William ROSE, RGR; Sgt Brendan John VANNER, RE; 2nd Lt Miles Robert WATT, PWRR; A/Capt Iwan Rhys WILLIAMS, Rifles

Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB): Gnr Sam JOHNSON, RA

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS): Maj Thomas Howard BEWICK, Rifles; Maj Simon Peter BROWNING, RLC; Lt Col Christopher Bernard DARBY, RGR; Capt James Andrew HADFIELD, Rifles; SSgt John Sebastian REEVES, REME; Capt Richard James SMITH, 4 Para; Cpl Mohan THAPA, QGE



Iraq

Commander of the Order of The British Empire (CBE): Brig Alexander James Sanson STORRIE OBE, late D and D

Officer of the Order of The British Empire (OBE): Lt Col Simon John Ravenscroft BROWNE MBE, R Anglian

Member of the Order of The British Empire (MBE): Capt James Michael Henry ALLEN, Rifles; Capt Richard James BREDIN, R Anglian

Military Cross (MC): SSgt Brendan William ELLIOTT, R Anglian; WO2 Brian Gerard FORRESTER, Para

Mention in Despatches (MiD): SSgt Warren GOURLEY, R Anglian; SSgt Robert Stewart MCGRORY, R Anglian; Capt Forbes Robert MCKENZIE, Int Corps; WO2 Anthony Dryden RONALDSON, Scots

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS): Lt Claire Elizabeth Rhiannon BROOKS, RE; WO2 Raymond Stephen DRIVER, RE; Capt Benjamin Thomas HAWES, R Anglian; Sgt Colin James MARSHALL, Scots; Capt Stephen Gerard WATERS, Para

National operations

Member of the Order of The British Empire (MBE): Maj Paul Anthony ARMITAGE, RA

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS): WO1 Philip Daniel BOWERS, RLC (V); Maj Michael Paul FORSTER, RE; Sgt Christopher John LEACH, R Anglian; Cpl Stephen David WILSON, R Signals



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Credit for cars, but not a computer

SINCE returning to the UK (and a BFPO address) 18 months ago following a seven-year spell in Germany, I have found that my credit rating has suffered as a result of my overseas posting.

I recently tried to buy a laptop from Comet but was refused credit by the store, a number of credit card companies and even by my bank of 20 years.

In Germany I never needed a credit card, but did buy seven brand new cars on finance. Now back in the UK I can't even secure £500 credit to purchase a laptop and, having been refused a number of times, have

apparently lowered my rating further.

Does anyone have any advice on how Service personnel can secure credit or on how to reassure lenders that those in the Army are not going to be made redundant tomorrow? – [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Work on this has been done by the MoD as part of the Service Families Task Force, which produced a fact sheet I suggest you read. It is available on the MoD Service community website and details how credit checking works and what you can do to help improve your rating.

It also explains that there are three major credit rating agencies in the UK: Call Credit, Equifax and Experian.

They hold a range of information about you, some from public sources such as the electoral roll and some from lenders such as details of your credit accounts and how you have managed payments in the past.

They all have a legal obligation to provide you with a copy of the information they hold for a fee, and all have dedicated advisers who will help you understand the information or sort out any concerns you may have about

it. The fact sheet also explains how to correct any inaccurate information showing on your credit report.

Further work to scope what else could be done to improve the situation is now being carried out by BFPO, MoD and the Association of Payment Clearing Services, which represent the banks and credit card communities.



Warming news welcome

I UNDERSTAND from the Army Families Federation (AFF) that Defence Estates (DE) is in the process of insulating all married quarters where possible.

Numerous telephone calls to my unit welfare officer, local HIVE, HQ AFF and DE have failed to identify when the loft of my own quarter will be insulated.

Equally, no one can explain why it is just lofts which will be insulated and not also wall cavities. Is this a state secret or does the chain of command not want to share the plan with us? I would like to inform my family of the situation before I deploy again to Afghanistan this month. – [Lt Col E Cameron, Camberley, Surrey](#).

David Lye, Defence Estates, RAF Brampton, responds: The nationwide Service Families Accommodation loft insulation programme has been developed in order to target those properties that are not currently included on the improvement programme and to prioritise those properties with the lowest

provision of insulation first.

The initial phase of the programme was completed earlier this year and delivered improved loft insulation to meet current Building Regulations to some 3,500 properties at various locations including Leeming, Catterick, Chivenor, Lichfield, Wattisham, Wittering, Bicester, Scampton, Ternhill, Upavon, Waddington, Shawbury and Larkhill.

The second phase is due to start as this issue of *Soldier* goes to press and will include 4,300 properties at locations including Stafford, Donnington, Shrewsbury, Chepstow, Hereford, Cosford, Bovington, Bulford/Tidworth, Colerne, Salisbury, Church Crookham, Connaught, Drayton, Winchester, Grantham, North Luffenham, Waterbeach, Wyton, Swanton Morley and Chilwell, as well as further properties at Ternhill, Shawbury, Wittering and Wattisham.

The third phase of the insulation programme is planned to start in April 2010, subject to funding.



"Damn it all, Frobisher. Give in to haircuts and we unleash a tornado... wash and sets for the women... hair restorer for the follicly-challenged. It just won't do, man."

IN LIGHT of the recent news that a prisoner, in jail for murdering his wife, has successfully forced the Government to pay for him to have his hair cut (at the rate of £7 every six weeks), could you please direct me to how I should submit my own claim for the same service. Furthermore, can you advise me of the procedure for claiming back 19 years worth of haircuts. By my estimation I am owed approximately £1,120. – [SSgt Woolfitt, Training Analyst, Chicksands](#).

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: While I do not suggest that soldiers looking for a free haircut should consider prison, I understand that prisoners, whose average earnings are £9 per week, find the cost of a haircut a considerable strain on their meagre resources. So if SSgt Woolfitt would like to refund his salary for the last 19 years less the equivalent of the prisoner's wage (by my estimation circa £529,862*) he might have a much stronger case for a refund!

* Based on 2009 annual pay scales, staff sergeant in the higher band.



Picture: Steve Dock

Less bangs for your buck

HAVING read your article on the Strategic Review of the Reserve Forces, "Power in Reserve" (June), I find myself mystified.

To be perfectly frank, I believe that *Soldier* has been misled. The last paragraph of the story states "more emphasis is being placed on making sure they [Reserve units] are up to date with annual competency standards". However, this contradicts what I was told during a briefing in mid June.

The briefing stated that over the course of this financial year millions of pounds worth of savings need to be made, and this money will be recouped by reducing Military Annual Training Tests (MATTs) from level two to level three and cutting weekend training to once a month.

As far as weapons training goes, this means that only the handling test needs to be passed. There will be no live firing of weapons, no ranges and no movement with loaded rifles. The savings measures

also mean that there will be no chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear training; no navigation training; no survive, evade, resist, extract training and only very basic first aid training.

How this will produce professional and competent soldiers is beyond me. Instead the cuts will lead to personnel who are lacking confidence in their ability to safely carry and use loaded weapons; unable to navigate across difficult terrain; ill-equipped to survive in contaminated environments and inexperienced in dealing with casualties.

I served for 16 years as a Regular soldier and have spent 14 years in the TA, and although most changes I've seen have been for the better, this is certainly not one of them. No doubt someone will bang on about the economic climate and belt tightening but I don't see how this will ensure TA soldiers are better able to deploy.
— SSgt B Thorne, 147 Fd Coy, REME.

Don't cull our training

IN the same month that *Soldier* reported that the Strategic Review of the Reserve Forces had recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on MATTs, the TA received orders stating that only troops about to deploy on operations should complete the training.

This seems to fly in the face of the report, although once you realise the move deprives TA personnel of their annual bounty it is easy to see why this decision was made.

We have also been forced to cancel all adventurous training, battlefield tours and ceremonial duties (with the exception of the HAC whose gun salutes and pike men are needed for ceremonies in the capital).

So despite our increased commitment on operations we are now no longer allowed to

parade on Remembrance Sunday or Armed Forces Day. Now that the fun parts and financial reward have been cut from being in the TA, where is the incentive to join?

Halving the weekly drill nights and restricting MATTs to op-bound troops will further widen the gulf between Regular and TA personnel. We are already treated with contempt by some full-time soldiers.

I am currently on operations in Afghanistan and can only wonder what will be waiting for me when I return to my unit in the UK. With training time cut and MATTs removed from the training syllabus what will we do for valuable training?

At least I won't have the inconvenience of having to get my medal mounted as I won't get the opportunity to wear it. — A disgruntled TA officer.

Brig Tom O'Brien, Director Reserves (Army), writes: There is clearly a concern regarding the short-term reduction in MTDs and the requirement for the Territorial Army to achieve the standards expected by the Army.

This year has proved to be extremely challenging in terms of finance. Along with all sectors of the UK's public services we are looking to do more with less.

Considerable work has been done across the Army to identify and cost potential areas of activity that might be reduced for one year only.

These in-year savings may be interpreted by some as a threat to the TA, but they are not.

They match actions that are being taken across the Army as a whole.

In parallel, the Commander-in-Chief

has directed the Army to adopt a campaign footing, which requires us to focus resources and activities on the current operation. The TA must play its part in this, so a renewed focus on effective training and a reduction in activities that do not have a clear link to supporting MoD priorities are required by all units.

The TA has not been singled out in order to make efficiencies; rather it must share its part while safeguarding the following three tenets:

- Ability to qualify for bounty;
- Where possible, the TA should be



PS...

AS a TA soldier with a specialist RLC unit based in Grantham, I am not surprised that the Strategic Review of the Reserve Forces found that training opportunities were inconsistent, "Power in Reserve" (June).

Our Man Training Days (MTDs) have been limited to 19 days due to budget cuts and anybody wanting to do extra training has to get the OC's permission.

I am being restricted to two weekends and an annual camp a year! How are TA soldiers supposed to train to meet the skill level reached by our Regular counterparts?

In my opinion the review should have addressed the number of TA soldiers not fit for mobilisation (some are in a worse state than the characters from *Dad's Army*) and recommended an increase in training budgets in a bid to boost the effectiveness of the Reserves. — Name and address supplied.

offered the opportunity to attend a full camp (15 days);

- Training of those earmarked for operations is not to be affected.

The TA is actively encouraged to wear its uniform in public. The Uniform to Work Day initiative is an example of this and recognises the important role the TA plays in community engagement. Wearing uniform on Remembrance Sunday or Armed Forces Day would never be discouraged. This year commanding officers may feel that classing this as C1 training may be necessary.

The TA is playing and will continue to play an important role in the Army. As much as the Regular Army, the TA will focus available resources in order to play our part in supporting the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan.

Picture: Graeme Main



Who's applying the brakes?

I AM led to believe that the MoD does not support the Government's Cycle to Work scheme because there is no one to administer the programme.

If this is the case, I find it very disappointing given the wide usage of bikes across the department, whether on military bases across the globe or in central London.

Surely it would make sense to encourage soldiers to adopt a "green" approach to transport while additionally keeping our troops fit. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: **This question was asked in a previous letter that was published by *Soldier* last year. For sometime my staff has been working with the MoD to examine ways of making this scheme work, but as one often finds, what looks like a brilliant idea is just not that simple.**

It is a common misconception that the Cycle to Work scheme permits employees to purchase cycles tax free – this is not the case.

The initiative is a tax-efficient bicycle loan arrangement which allows the employer to purchase cycles which are then hired to employees through salary sacrifice.

The employee hires the cycle and must give it back to the owner (the employer) at the end of the scheme.

There are drawbacks to this programme, chief among them being the adverse impact on Home to Duty Travel (HDT), which is currently paid tax-free by virtue of a special concession from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

HDT could not be paid to a recipient of the Cycle to Work scheme as he or she would be receiving two tax-free benefits for the same journey.

While an individual may make some savings through the programme, these are likely to be much less than the loss arising from an inability to claim HDT.

Civilian employers, in general, may have a Cycle to Work scheme in place, but most don't pay an equivalent of HDT for daily commuting.



"Sorry Susie... the new car and your health spa weekend need to go on the back burner. They won't pay to have me back."

I WOULD like to suggest the following as a way of saving the Armed Forces millions of pounds each year.

It has been made public that there is a severe shortage of money within Defence, hence certain recruiting bans and overtime restrictions being put in place on civilian personnel.

If this is the case then why are we paying simple things like retention and re-enlistment bounties? These payments should be stopped – I challenge anyone wishing to leave the Armed Forces to find a job that will pay them the same wage (with benefits) they are currently in receipt of.

The monies spent training Service personnel are extremely high, so why are we giving money away? Simply raise the minimum service from four to six years, then if the individual wishes to leave let them. There are plenty of people (in civvy street) who will willingly fulfil the vacant roll.

If the person who left later wishes to return to the Forces that's fine, but they left of their own accord so why give them money when they return?

I know this would cause upset among the ranks, but it is time to be realistic. This solution would raise vital funds in support of our boys and girls on the front line. – **Pte A Washbrook, MPGS, Hermitage.**

Can they take my Province payments?

AS a soldier and a father, I do not have any problems with paying maintenance for my daughter, but was surprised to learn that the Child Support Agency (CSA) takes into account my Northern Ireland Resident's Supplement (NIRS) payment.

From reading other replies to *Talkback* letters on this subject, I was led to believe that CSA payments were calculated on net pay, less tax and National Insurance. In which case, are the CSA right to use NIRS to push up my maintenance payments?

I have sought to gain advice from my admin office, but they don't seem to have an answer. My argument is with the CSA not the Army, but I would appreciate some clarification on this matter. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: NIRS compensates you for the additional pressures and restrictions of life in Northern Ireland.


It does not reimburse for expenditure














and therefore it forms part of your net pay; it is taxed and you pay appropriate National Insurance contributions.

Because NIRS forms part of your income the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC) – which replaced the CSA – take it into account when calculating your payments.

CMEC will not take into account those allowances which you can claim for expenditure incurred (such as subsistence allowance or motor mileage allowance).

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'You're right, we're not different'

FIND it telling that, almost to a man, the letter writers who took up their pens in response to July's *Soldier* demonstrate exactly why Tpr James Wharton (HCR) was on the front cover.

In proclaiming that they don't want to hear about the issue of gay Service personnel because they dislike that our [homosexual] lifestyle is considered different, ironically they are supporting our efforts.

Gay personnel who serve/have served in the Forces don't want to be treated differently, we only seek equality. Would those correspondents hide their spouse if it wasn't acceptable to be married, make one up if they could not be openly single, or deny parenthood if admitting to having children was a dismissible offence?

How would they feel if they were bullied and victimised for any of the above?

We train, fight, bleed and sometimes die the same as anyone else, but you would not notice Tpr Wharton or myself in a group of work colleagues. We are the same as you,

as good as you – please respect us as such.

As for marching in Pride, we do so for who we are, not what we are. It's not a political rally, it's a festival – the clue is in the title. We are proud to serve/have served in the Forces and have permission to parade from the military's open-minded, ground-breaking seniors.

As for the writers who criticised the state of dress of those pictured taking part in Pride, they should take note that the picture was taken without warning during a two-hour parade.

I know because I was there with other civil servants. Oddly, the likes of Mr Billy Smart did not mention the RAF officer who, unlike Tpr Wharton, was

clearly not standing to attention.

I am an ex-TA soldier and when I married my boyfriend I was proud to have my Permanent Staff Admin Officer (a former Regular Army major) and his wife among our reception guests. – **Ian Goodwin-Reeves, ex-AGC (SPS).**



PS...

I WAS surprised by the reaction to July's cover story about homosexuality in the British Army.

Many of the letters you printed in August's *Talkback* complained that there was no need to "flaunt the issue", or to go into details of soldiers' private lives.

However, I note that there was no such backlash to June's edition of *Soldier*, which featured a woman in a wedding dress on the front cover and carried several articles about married heterosexuals.

Both editions of the magazine simply addressed relationship issues in an open, interesting and even-handed manner without going into any inappropriate detail.

Yet Tpr James Wharton's cover picture and interview provoked outrage from a number of your readers.

I wonder whether those correspondents who claim that they have no issue with or interest in soldiers' sexuality need to re-examine their own prejudices. – **Clare Walsh, Edinburgh.**



Picture: Mike Weston

I READ with interest the article "Pride, not Prejudice" (July) and the subsequent comments in *Talkback*.

Sexual orientation within the Forces has been a controversial subject for many years and evidently continues to provoke strong personal opinion. However, on reading the comments it struck me that an important operational dimension has not been considered.

Current ops are focused on Islamic regions and populations, where views on homosexuality are, rightly or wrongly, much more conservative. The insurgents in these regions are skilled at using the information environment to influence local populations and will capitalise on any advantage they can utilise.

By bringing the sexuality of Service personnel out of the private and into the public domain we risk giving the

enemy an advantage in shaping the popular opinion of the hearts and minds we are aiming to win.

Within the Services it is not part of our remit to judge overseas Islamic beliefs or those of any UK group or individuals. Indeed, as an apolitical organisation we follow orders or choose to seek other employment as our conscience dictates.

It is however our duty to ensure that we maximise every factor towards creating the conditions for operational success.

Commanders and Service personnel, irrespective of rank or personal lifestyle, need to consider this before wearing their uniform at a public event or participating in media activities which may, in any small way, be detrimental to colleagues deployed on ongoing operations. – **Maj Pat Owen, 6 (UK) Division.**

PS...

I WOULD like to inform Maj C Ball, "Pride before a fall" (August), that Gay Pride has absolutely nothing to do with politics.

Comparing going to Pride, which is a celebration of gay rights, to a British National Party rally is disgusting.

This one-minded approach is the reason why so many gay soldiers don't come out.

Some of the feedback on what I thought was a brilliant article by *Soldier* ["Pride not prejudice" (July)] made me so angry. – **Name and address supplied.**

'March about pride, not politics'

I AM a regular reader of *Soldier* and as a result I felt the need to answer some of the issues raised in the *Talkback* section of August's edition.

The first regards Capt P Bray's false assumption that the wearing of one's uniform to a Gay Pride event is some form of political statement.

Not true. It is merely representative of an individual's feelings of pride in their sexuality and the acceptance of

homosexuality by the military.

I also have to disagree with those who suggested that July's magazine detracted from the hard work and leaps in understanding that the Army has made in recent years concerning the issue of homosexuals in the ranks.

The series of articles was, in my experience, a good conversation starter that led to many misconceptions being allayed. – **Name and address supplied.**

Cash for childcare, please

WHY don't the Armed Forces assist parents in the payment of childcare? With wages on civvy street static or dropping and the cost of nursery fees rising, Service families are finding it increasingly difficult to pay for pre-school care.

During my previous posting my wife had a job that enabled us to both work, pay for our son to go to nursery and still remain financially comfortable.

However, when I was posted last year my wife had to leave her job and begin the search for a new one.

After many months of trying she found a new post, but had to quit soon after because the cost of childcare exceeded her take home pay.

Due to the nomadic nature of life in the Armed Forces my wife and son are missing out.

I know that the Continuity of Education Allowance provides massive support to families with children at school, but why are those with younger children and spouses who

wish to work being penalised? – SSgt L P McAnespie, 4 Regt AAC.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Mobility can make life more complicated for some Service families. We acknowledge this and are trying to make the provision of childcare more accessible, but with limited budgets there must be a balance between what is the Army's responsibility and what is a personal responsibility. At this time the provision of childcare is not a military responsibility.

I am disappointed that you do not know about the MoD's Childcare Voucher Scheme (www.modchildcare.co.uk) and that you are unaware of the MoD's families fact sheet, which can be found online at www.mod.uk

Depending on your circumstances you may also be eligible for UK state benefits. You can find out more about this from www.direct.gov.uk

Finally, I'm not sure that you are being penalised. As a staff sergeant you are on what is considered a good salary (approximately £35,000 against the UK average of £27,000) and I'm sure there are many in the current economic climate who would change places with you.

PS...

THE biggest issue which needs to be addressed by the Armed Forces is the inversely proportional payment to risk ratio. By and large the more academic or technical qualifications required of Service personnel, the greater their pay and the less likelihood of their deployment to the front line.

Throughout history the Infantry has been at the bottom of the pile when the cash is being handed out. It is high time that recognition is given to the people who actually do the shooting and, more importantly, get shot at.

It cannot be right that some sailor/technician on board an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf – who only knows where he is because it's warmer than the Solent – earns more than the infantryman in close contact with the enemy. I am not advocating the reduction in pay for the sailor but seeking more recognition for the soldier.

Those away from imminent danger do a worthy and essential job, but we should increase the status of and reward for those who have to venture from the relative comfort of "slipper city" locations such as Kandahar. – Bill Smart, Shrewsbury.



PS...

I AM writing in response to the letter "Chips down as chef raises the steaks" (July).

Firstly, Pay As You Dine (PAYD) is here to stay, so we must embrace it and make sure of its success.

Secondly, as military caterers we still have the opportunities to show flair, imagination and skills – be it on operations, mess dinner nights or unit exercises.

The way we cater for PAYD is no different to the kitchens of a top hotel in London. Whether preparing a core meal of cottage pie on camp or a wild mushroom risotto in a five star restaurant, the dish should be the same every time it is on the menu.

PAYD catering will enhance a military chef's outlook on catering to a specific budget and ensure they maintain vital commercial business skills. Before PAYD we had a system of creating recipes for dishes which dictated which rations were used in each meal. It wasn't too dissimilar to what we do now.

Hopefully PAYD will give Army chefs an edge if they later choose to return to the catering scene on civilian street. – Cpl K Horsfall, Lancs.



Shocked by great train robbery

I RECENTLY underwent surgery which resulted in two weeks authorised sick leave from my unit. During this period I was required to return to work for a follow-up medical appointment which meant that, as I was unable to drive, I needed rail warrants for two return journeys between Lincoln and Weymouth.

Having used the train to get to my unit prior to surgery, I knew that the cheapest direct return fare available with a Forces Railcard was £63.75.

So imagine my surprise at the total fare of £433.10 using rail warrants, which broke the journey down into four single legs. Even the staff at the ticket office remarked that the tickets represented the worst possible value.

Why have we gone away from using the cheapest route possible? Buying two standard return tickets would have saved nearly £250.

Is the increased cost due to having to use a contracted company to book the travel? If so, in this time of cutbacks, would it not be cheaper to return to the old system of paper warrants? – Sgt C Bousfield.

Christine Green, Business Manager (Rail) DSCOM, responds: Firstly, I would like to point out that it is difficult to compare fares accurately due to the time lapsed since Sgt

Bousfield's travel date.

At the time the soldier made his reservation over the phone with HRG UK Hogg Robinson, he requested two journeys, the first being a weekend date out and a midweek return.

He was offered a return journey "not via London" as this was the cheapest option at £96.60, but this was not suitable as the traveller required an "any route permitted" for his return leg.

The second journey requested was for weekday out and weekend return. Again the cheapest option was offered and this was based on two single journeys with a total fare of £221.60.

There isn't a cheaper fare available with the train operating companies and a warrant would have resulted in the same fare. I can assure you that the team at HRG will always offer the most cost effective fare based on the traveller's requirements and it is down to the traveller to be as specific as possible.

Had there been any question at the time of booking that the fare was incorrectly priced then the issue could have been investigated immediately.

I must also stress that the fare of £63.75 quoted by Sgt Bousfield was using a Forces Railcard for duty travel. The normal fare of £96.60 off-peak return is available through HRG and would have been offered in the first instance.

Journey home an uphill struggle

As a Gurkha soldier in the British Army I, like many others in the Brigade of Gurkhas, am having problems when travelling overseas – including visits to Nepal – as a result of being a Nepalese passport holder.

With no visa for the UK, I am required to show my Army ID card at airports which does not seem sensible from a security perspective.

Why doesn't the Government issue Gurkhas with a British passport or some kind of work visa for the duration of our service? This would make overseas travel easier. – Name and address supplied.

Ms L Holt, LF Sec (F&C), responds:

I was surprised to read that you are experiencing difficulties when travelling overseas and have been asked to show your Army ID card at the airport.

When Gurkhas and all other non-British citizens are enlisted, their passports should be sent to the UK Border Agency to have an Exempt UK

Immigration Control stamp inserted.

This is to enable them to leave and enter the UK without restriction.

Personnel are entitled to this exemption for the duration of their service and they and their units must ensure that when a passport is renewed it has an exemption stamp inserted.

There is no requirement therefore for any sort of UK visa. I cannot explain why you have been asked to show your ID card. It may be the case that some immigration officers want to see it as additional proof that you are a member of the UK Armed Forces and your entitlement to your UK

exemption stamp. If, however, it is because you do not currently have a UK exemption stamp it may be their only means of checking your entitlement. If so, you need to put this right as soon as possible through your unit welfare officer.

As for visits overseas, British citizens can obviously travel freely through Europe, but anyone travelling to a country of which they are not a citizen may be required to have a visa. The Army will provide visas for official travel overseas, but visas for private visits are an individual's responsibility.



Picture: Mike Weston

Tired of waiting for Service accommodation

DUE to a shortage of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) in the area, I have been living in private rented housing for more than two years.

Despite being told I was on a waiting list for a quarter, I've just found out that a private soldier in my unit has been given a married pad.

The family in question has no children, whereas I have two.

How is housing allocated? Is it on a first come, first served basis? – Name and address supplied.

Nicki Sly, Defence Estates, replies:

Unfortunately when SFA is not available to meet a required date we have no option but to offer Substitute Service Family Accommodation (SSFA).

Defence Estates' primary remit is to provide accommodation for personnel who would otherwise be homeless and to prioritise housing allocation on a case-by-case basis.

Although an occupant's circumstances may change while living in SSFA, if they are already housed to entitlement it is

entirely reasonable that they are then not accorded the highest priority for a move to SFA. The current shortage of SFA in some areas means that although it would normally make financial sense to rehouse an occupant in SFA, at the present time a large number of such moves would result in another entitled family being moved into SSFA, hence there is no financial justification for the move.

Families should be assured, however, that all cases of occupants living in SSFA are routinely reviewed.

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RFPOR5039 JAN09 OTP Soldier

Campaign count confusion

THE response from Brig Mike Griffiths to a letter calling for official recognition for repeat deployments, "Time to reward return tours" (July), suggested that permission to accept and wear allied awards is only granted if no British medal exists for a campaign.

Does this extend to decorations such as the UN Bosnia medal and Nato awards from the Balkans, which many of us wear with pride?

Brig Griffiths also stated that repeat tours are recognised by the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM). This is all well and good, but why does the time spent on tours in the Balkans not count towards the ACSM? Over the course of my 16 years as a soldier I served there three times – with 1 RGBW; as part of HQ BRITFOR; and on Task Force Harvest with 16 Air Assault Brigade. On each deployment I was serving my country and on each occasion the lives of British soldiers were lost. – [Name and address supplied](#).



Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: Medals are a contentious issue and none more so than the Balkans and the ACSM [pictured left].

The current policy is that Balkans service does not count towards accumulated service because: there is a profusion of medals recognising service there already; in some cases numerals to the medals indicate repeat service; and the terms of the ACSM previously considered the case for inclusion of Balkan service and rejected it.

This is a tri-Service decision taken at the highest levels within the MoD and was recently confirmed by the Army Board.

On the positive side there were six different medals awarded for Balkan service and repeat tours were recognised by the wearing of a numeral for each subsequent tour of six months.

Your tours and those of many thousands of fellow Servicemen have been recognised, just not by the ACSM.



PS . . . FOLLOWING the decision in August to grant Nato personnel permission to stay in Iraq, can you advise whether those British soldiers who do so will be allowed to wear the Nato Training Mission (Iraq) medal. If not, will a new decoration be struck for personnel who remain in theatre? – [Name and address supplied](#).

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, Medal Office, writes: I have confirmed with PJHQ that Op Telic has not ceased. Therefore, those very few personnel still in Iraq will qualify for the Iraq medal [pictured above].

If they have already received it, the time served will accrue towards the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal. There is no permission to wear Nato medals earned in Iraq or Afghanistan.

MUCH has been written in the national press about the newly-instituted Elizabeth Cross, which is to be given to the next-of-kin of our fallen Servicemen and women.

The Elizabeth Cross was recommended to Her Majesty by the military chiefs to recognise the huge debt this country owes to the families of those brave individuals left behind and the concept has been hailed as innovative.

However, while I applaud any recognition given to our fallen and their families, can I point out that the award is not as innovative as the top brass would have us believe, as the United Kingdom is yet again playing catch-up with our Commonwealth partners.

The design of the medal is almost identical to the Canadian Memorial Cross, which was first instituted on December 1, 1919 and given to widows and mothers of Service personnel who had died during the Great War. A second version was introduced in August 1940 for widows and mothers of Second World War Service personnel.

In January 2007, the Canadian Federal Government made a revision to the way the Memorial Cross is awarded, so that all Service-related deaths are recognised, not only those occurring in overseas operations, and allowing up to three recipients of the decoration.

The New Zealand Memorial Cross, which was first instituted on August 16, 1960, was originally granted to the next-of-kin of those who had lost their lives on active service during the Second World War, or who had subsequently died of wounds or illness contracted during that conflict. The Cross was given to the mother, as well as to the widow or eldest surviving daughter or son of the fallen. – **Sgt Ken Fowler, Warwickshire Police.**



Picture: Sgt Andy Malthouse, RAF

PS . . .

I FULLY agree with Kevin Walker's opinion that no one should wear medals that they are not entitled to, "Stamp out 'bling' and buy" (August). The Golden Jubilee Medal was and always will be a controversial award in the eyes of ex-Service personnel.

I, and many like me, thought the medal should have been issued to all those who have served during Her Majesty's reign.

Let's not forget the Silver Jubilee Medal was issued on the whim of commanding officers and needless to say thousands missed out!

Still we can always send for the Government's cheaper alternative – the Veteran's Badge. – **Mr R K Toon.**

I CONTINUE to be surprised by the emotion generated by medals, especially by those who feel hard done by in some way.

I am also rather disappointed that they keep finding their way into the *Talkback* section of *Soldier*. Is there really nothing more interesting going on and do the letters on this subject represent such a high percentage of your total postbag that they warrant inclusion on such a regular basis? There were no less than three on the topic in the August edition. By the way, what about a Prisoner of War medal? – **Lt Col Nick Sim, SHAPE.**

The editor, doffing his comedy cap to SHAPE's satirist, types: Get your esteemed colleagues to stop writing them and I'll stop printing them. In the meantime, enjoy this full-page of medal moans!



"Dear *Soldier*... If Lt Col Sim gets his way and they award a PoW medal, will there be a bar for those of us who escaped? – **Ex-Stalag 23.**"

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Information
For the Service Community

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Army is set to help to put families back on their feet

POLITICAL leaders tend to make rallying speeches when things are going wrong and Gordon Brown's recent brief on operations in Afghanistan to the International Institute for Strategic Studies was no exception (Page 7).

Mounting press speculation over the effectiveness of the campaign, the soaring casualty rates and the resignation of Labour MP and former Army officer Eric Joyce from his position as aide to the Defence Secretary all meant the Prime Minister had little choice but to step to the microphone and deliver. His aim was to get the public behind the war and to reassure troops that their mission is worthwhile, achievable and properly resourced.

I did a number of media interviews on the day, with the press apparently keen to get a family view rather than cycle through the usual suspects of talking heads and politicians.

My initial reaction to the question "what do families think of the strategy for Afghanistan?" was "they don't care". My husband, who tends to be a good sounding board before I disappear off to have my 15 minutes of fame, thought that this was rather too simplistic.

But a couple of girlfriends and fellow Army wives thought I was spot on. So was this an example of the male/female psyche at odds or a soldier/family mindset clash?

The greatest worry for a family when a soldier is away, or preparing to go away, is about getting them back home safely – not why he or she is there in the first place.

Parents may have a different view. After all, they want to understand the whys and



wherefores of sending their son or daughter into a war zone, and probably have the luxury of time to ask themselves those questions and study the media to feed their curiosity. Many spouses, on the other hand, are so busy concentrating on keeping the family train on the right track that they don't or won't question for what greater good they

are being left on their own. Those questions can wait until the soldier is back on home soil.

Families do listen to politicians' speeches and read the newspapers, but it's the pre-deployment briefings that they pay most attention to.

Those briefings tell them the three key things they need to know – when their soldier is going, when they're coming back and who to contact if they need help. And this is from the chain of command, a trusted and reliable source of information rather than mere speculation.

I recently asked a group of spouses what they worried about when their soldier was away. The greatest fear was: "What happens if he comes home injured, not just physically but mentally? Who will look after us? What will happen to us?"

It was clear to me that, although rarely voiced, these concerns are commonplace.

A conscious decision the AFF took some time ago was to give as much information to families about these unpleasant-but-possible what-ifs.

One edition of our journal reported on the processes that kick in after a family suffers a bereavement.

We also looked at the work of Combat Stress and, in a future edition, we will be providing information for families on dealing with mental health issues. As part of my research for this article I visited Selly Oak Hospital and talked to staff and patients about the work going on with operational casualties and how Army unit welfare staff assist families.

Policies and procedures are not the complete answer to dealing with casualties and bereavement. But at least if someone – anyone – has asked about the what-ifs, life will be a little easier if an unthinkable situation becomes a reality. ■

● CGS: 'Why the British Army is in Afghanistan' – Pages 43-45

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NO. 815

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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TEN details have been changed on this picture taken inside an AS90 at the Contingency Operating Base, Basra. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 815, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by October 30.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the December issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

August competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Mrs Linda Gilroy MP**, House of Commons, London. Runners-up **SSgt Kate Bowier**, 258 Sig Sqn, Gamecock Barracks, Bramcote and **Mr H Gault**, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: Jackal 2 vehicle; antennae; side light; clip on roof assembly; left hand indicator; left hand wing mirror; clip on netting; KL on registration plate; catch on storage assembly; support bar.



AS Bob "The Boss" Ainsworth moved to assert his authority at the MoD, it became apparent that he wasn't the stay-in-Main-Building mould of minister.

No – the new Secretary of State wanted to show his support for the Forces by mixing it up with the troops. And he was soon donning his best pinstriped flight suit to hang out with the aviator elite.

Some of the entries about Bob were far too political to find their way into the magazine. Among the best of the printable crop, however, was this effort from Ian Goodwin-Reeves of Redhill, Surrey. He thought the Defence Secretary looked lost as he remarked: **"What do you mean this isn't the Woolwich Ferry?"**

Another gem came from LCpl O'Brien of RAF Linton who thought the pilots didn't recognise their guest, telling Bob: **"You salesmen will try to flog windows anywhere."**



Pte Jones's mates were only too pleased to volunteer him for an act on Gordy's Afghan magic show

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by October 30.

The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *The Making of the British Army: From the English Civil War to the War on Terror* by Allan Mallinson.

But Simon Harrison of Upavon penned this month's winning entry. He gave the initiative to the Defence Secretary who is quoted as saying: **"Are you sure the Treasury will allow two of you to greet me?"** He wins a copy of Patrick Bishop's Afghan war book *Ground Truth*.



Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere, RLC

Picture: LA (Phot) Kelly McAlinden

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Army Welfare Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gt.net.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstons.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

Until October 31: Terrible Trenches Exhibition. Imperial War Museum, London. Book online at www.iwm.org.uk/ztrenches or call 0207 416 5439.

October 10-11: The Cheltenham Steam and

Vintage Fair. Usual family attractions, including a sizeable military section. Cheltenham Race Course. Gates open 0930-1630. Tickets: Adult £6, Senior Citizens £5, Children (5-15 years) £3.

Opening October 24: War Boy, The Michael Foreman Exhibition. Exploring some of the complex themes of the World Wars and the civilian connection with the British Army. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk

Until January 2010: The Children's War. Imperial War Museum, London. Admission free.

November 7, 8, 14, 15: We Will Remember Them. Art activity for families using military buttons to create your own remembrance poppy. Imperial War Museum, London. Admission free.

November 28-29: Birmingham Tattoo. Massed Bands, Field Gun competition, exciting displays. National Indoor Arena, Birmingham. Tickets £9.50 to £19.50 (concessions available). Box office 0844 338 8000 or www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk

SEARCHLINE

Paul Griffiths is searching for a photograph of his brother **Rfn David Griffiths**, who served with **B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets** until his death in Belfast in 1972. Born in 1952 and had served for 16 months. Contact Paul by email paulgriffiths_423@yahoo.co.uk

A researcher is gathering evidence for a novel on south west France in an area where local legend tells of a black man being part of the British Army 200-300 years ago. Local lore has it that a hamlet – "Le Negre" – was named after him. If it's true, why was he there? If you can help, please contact Anna Arfaras by email anna.arfaras258@mod.uk

Eileen Hobson is looking for former colleagues from 4 Squadron, 16 Signal Regiment who served in Bielefeld, Germany between 1972-1975. Eileen was promoted to sergeant during her tour and would especially like to find **LCpl Steven Weatherall, Royal Signals.** Contact Eileen by email at ehbsn@btinternet.com

Michael Peter Gates is looking for **Darren Crutchley RLC** who he served with between September 1995 and May 2002. Darren joined the Army in 1977 and is now believed to be a SSgt based in Germany. Contact Helen Walton by email HelenWalton@cestria.org

A researcher is currently writing a book on Kingswear, Devon during the Second World War. He is looking for veterans who knew of or were based at the wartime **Radar Station**, known as RAF Kingswear, as well as the **Gun Battery** at Forward Point at the mouth of the River Dart. British, American and Free French troops were based in the area in the build up to the Normandy invasion. Contact Dr David Williams, Higher Backside, 3 Kingston Cottages, Brownstone Road, Kingswear, Devon TQ6 0EG.

Mrs Peggy Bolger is trying to trace Normandy veteran **Herbert Mortimer.** Herbert worked in the printing trade in London. He also had relatives in Yorkshire. Last known address is Claude Road, Leyton, London. Contact Mrs P Bolger, Flat 5, Royal Court, Bedford Road, Babbacombe, Torquay, Devon TQ1 3LJ.

Peter Lawrence Dykes, born December 26, 1943 at the Military Families Hospital, Bovington Camp is searching for his father **Lawrence Taylor.** Peter's father was a Cpl (841086) in the RAC based in Bovington in 1943-1944 and his mother is Phyllis Eileen Lockyer who lived in Bournemouth. Contact Mrs G Dykes, 6 Ridgeway, Ashcott, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9PP.

Andy Fisher is looking for those who joined B1 Troop (**Lt Tim Hall, Sgt Charlie Packham, Sgt Bob Biddle**), B Squadron, Junior Leaders Regiment RAC in September 1974 and passed off in December 1975. Hoping to organise a reunion in December 2010 to mark the 35th year since we passed off. Contact Maj Andy Fisher by email andylynfisher58@hotmail.com

The Norwegian Campaign 1940 – TV Documentary. Norwegian film company Ekko Films is seeking British veterans who participated in the ill-fated campaign in Norway in April 1940 for a TV programme. German and Norwegian veterans are also being interviewed. Ekko Films would like to hear from veterans who served with the British Armed Forces in the Norwegian Campaign. Contact Robert Pearson, 21 Meadowvale Close, Ipswich IP4 4HE, phone 01473 716380 or send him an email at bakerstreetrebel@yahoo.co.uk

80th (Cheshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron. This unit will be disbanding in the near future. If anyone made a presentation to the unit and would like to reclaim it, please do so before the end of **December 2009.** After this date the items will be auctioned and monies raised donated to charity. Contact Capt Chris Hopkins on 01928 715809 or email 33sr-80sqn-psao@mod.uk

93 (East Lancashire) Signal Squadron. The Squadron will disband in **March 2010.** Over the last 40 years, many items have been donated to the Officers' Mess, Warrant Officers' & Sergeants' Mess and the Junior Ranks Club. Anyone who has made donations is invited to reclaim the item(s) before the disbandment date to the appropriate Corps Mess. Contact the PSAO, Capt Dale Ikin on 01254 262444, email 38sr-93-psao@mod.uk or write to the PSAO, 92 Signal Squadron (V), The Barracks, Canterbury Street, Blackburn BB2 2HS.

REUNIONS

Royal Devon Yeomanry: Reunion dinner on October 17 in Barnstaple. All past and present members and attached ranks of the Royal Devon Yeomanry Artillery and D Squadron, The Wessex Yeomanry. Ladies please attend. Contact the PSAO D Sqn by phone on 01271 345471 or email rwxy-dsqn-psao@mod.uk

289 Para/Cdo Regiment/Battery: All ranks reunion October 24 at Napier House, Grove Park, London. Open to all personnel (and partners) who served in 289 in any formation and rank. Contact Capt B W Exley, 265 Bty RA, Napier House, Baring Road, London SE12 0BH, phone 0208 860 1444 or email 106-265-psao@mod.uk

93 (E Lancs) Signal Squadron (V): 40th anniversary dinner will be held on October 24. Preceded by evensong in Blackburn Cathedral on September 27 at 1600. Contact Capt Dale Ikin on 01254 262444 or email 38sr-93-psao@mod.uk

Ammunition Technicians & Examiners:

AGM and reunion lunch October 24. Contact Bob Graham on 07765 965477 or email ammotechs@yahoo.co.uk

Alexis Soyer Dinner: October 29, Worthy Down Officers' Mess. Officers who have completed the Food Service/Food Supply Officers' courses or are currently in a FS supporting role are eligible to attend. Contact Capt M Peters or Mrs N Driver on 94271 2294 or 01962 887287/887294 by October 12.

South Nottingham Hussars: Reunion, remembrance dinner and church service on November 7-8 at the TA Centre, Bulwell Nottingham. Past and present members with partners welcome. Remembrance event at St Mary's Church. For dinner tickets contact Capt C Dibb by phone on 0115 926 8063.

57 Battery 32 Regiment/39 Regiment: All ranks reunion, December 5 at Wagon Lines, Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill. Contact LBdr Russell, 57 Bty, 32 Regt RA, Robert Bks, Larkhill, Wilts SP4 8QU or phone 01980 845055, email 57bty@yahoo.co.uk

Singapore Schools: Reunion for former pupils of all military schools, to be held on March 20, 2010 at the Ramada Hotel, Hatfield. Contact singapore.school.reunion@googlemail.com or visit www.singas.co.uk

RAMC Reunited: Reunion for former RAMC members (National Service, Regular, TA or widow(er)). You and a partner are invited to attend on February 12-14, 2010 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Mick McCran, 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ enclosing a C5 SAE or email michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

16 Regt RA Officers' Mess: Reunion at St George's Officers' Mess, North Luffenham on November 28, 2009. Contact Maj Ali James by November 13 at 14 (Cole's Kop) Bty, 16 Regt RA, St George's Bks, North Luffenham LE15 8RL or email alison.waddie805@mod.uk

COMPETITIONS

Jordin Sparks, winners: Pte Karisambudzi, 33 Fd Hospital, Gosport; Cpl R P Hood, 462 MI Sect, Bulford Camp; G Baxter, JHQ, BFPO 40; Mrs J Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison; Mr & Mrs J Milne, Mytchett, Camberley.

Streets of Blood, winner: Sgt W Bennett, 40 Regt RA, BFPO 801. **Runners-up:** Ms H Lewis; Ms G Thompson, Springhead, Oldham; Cpl Temdekai Chitiyo, 10 QOGLR, Aldershot; G Exley, Billericay, Essex.

Icepaq, winners: Sgt M Aplin, DE&S ISS, BFPO 52; S Smith, Middle Wallop.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and question-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

October: 14, Brighton; 15, Gravesend; 21, Horsham. **November:** 3, Worthington; 5, Southport; 16, Chelsea; 17, Barnet; 24, Isle of Man; 26, Twickenham. **December:** No presentations.

WIND CHEATERS



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www.army.mod.uk

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.armedforces.co.uk

Over 2,000 pages of Defence information, including defence projects and equipment, technology information, military books and defence supplier's details.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

www.sftf.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.hmforces.co.uk

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www.forcesdiscount-mod.co.uk

The discounts and benefits provided in the Defence Discount Directory and web site are aimed at the Defence Community.

www.nfassociation.org

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www.veterans-aid.net

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www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.starandgarter

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www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to? Are you Doing Alright?

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Support available to Army personnel and their families is given through the Army Welfare Service (AWS)



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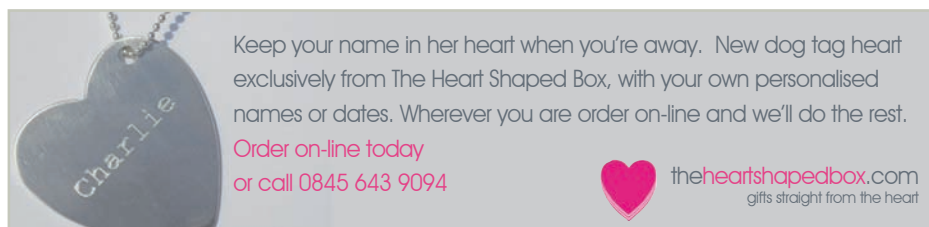
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www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

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Nikki, 5'10", in her 30s, slim, toned, sporty and has a great smile. Enjoys taking her MTB to extreme places, flying her power kites, motorsports, camper vans, the beach, open spaces and The Killers. Would love to make contact and get to know single soldiers 28-44, to share some chat about life's adventures, please enclose a photo with reply. P059

Catherine, (52), 5'6", enjoys youth club, badminton, Guides, the cinema, outdoors and meeting people. Seeking pen pals, 45-55. P063

Lads with The Royal Anglians serving with ISAF in Kabul seek pen pals any age group to write to. The letters will be passed around to the lads. P064

Valerie, (35), curvy, busty single mum of one would like to write to male soldiers serving in Afghanistan and overseas, 18-45. Enjoys listening to music, watching DVDs and writing letters. P065

PEN PAL REPLIES:

To reply to a pen pal, write a letter and send it to: **Soldier Magazine, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU**

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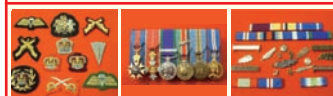
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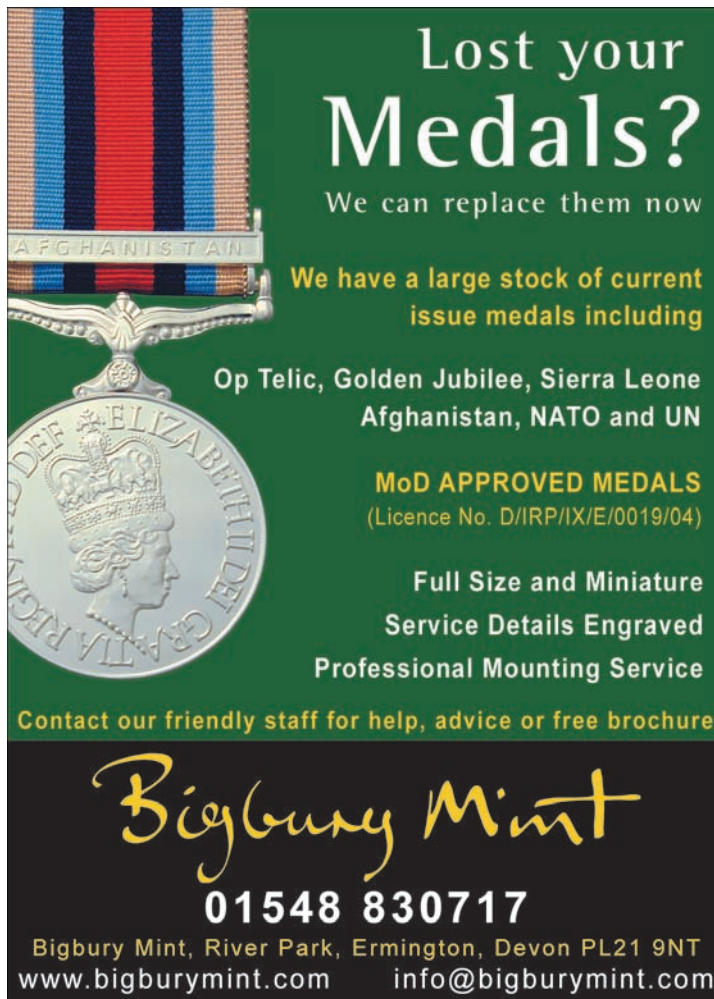
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OCTOBER'S TRICKS AND TREATS

P84 MOVIES **CREEPY COPS**

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P88 MUSIC **SPOOKY SCANDINAVIANS**

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Shop cop: Seth Rogen clashes egos with Ray Liotta as the pair hunt a perverted flasher stalking a shopping mall in comedy *Observe and Report*

Revenge of the Seth

Officer Liotta sparks store wars with mall cop Rogen in shopping centre comedy

Review: Richard Long

WITH a retail empire to protect at the Forest Ridge Mall, head of security Ronnie Barnhardt (Seth Rogen) rules with an iron fist in *Observe and Report*.

Although he is not faced with skilled criminal masterminds he does have to combat boisterous skateboarders, unruly customers and petty thieves in a role he takes very seriously.

But the grip he enjoys over the middle-America shopping centre is threatened when a flasher (Randy Gambill) strikes fear into female customers through a series of lewd exposures.

Driven by his mission to protect the good folk of Forest Ridge, Barnhardt is determined to crack the case but when beauty counter saleswoman Brandi (Anna Faris) becomes the flasher's latest victim the mall manager turns to the police.

The mall cop sees this as an unwelcome intrusion on his jurisdiction and a turf war soon develops between the head of security and surly Detective Harrison (Ray Liotta), who takes the police lead on the investigation.

Although Barnhardt is far from a loveable

hero – he is rude, offensive, quite dark at times and completely alien to the “nice guy” roles that Rogen usually creates when working alongside co-writer Evan Goldberg and director Judd Apatow – the actor was more than happy to follow a different acting route for this film.

“To me, I’m totally comfortable doing it. I mean, yeah, I had no fears or trepidations going in,” he said. “It was a funny movie. It was a funny role. One of the reasons I liked it is it’s not the type of role we think of for me or for our characters.

“Jody Hill [director and screenwriter] does something very different to what me, Evan and Judd do. And that’s one of the things that drew me to it. I had no fears, I was excited to work with another guy with a strong creative voice.”

Observe and Report is awash with the predictable crude gags and vulgarity associated with such films and, for Rogen, shooting the risqué scenes with Gambill’s flasher were particularly memorable.

He explained: “When they were about to say ‘action’ he’d make this Batman-esque ‘foosh’ sound and throw his coat open like a cape and just expose himself and then run down the mall like that.

“But, to me, it was the funniest thing. It was

surreal, but every time – I’ll never forget – his trench coat would just unfurl behind him and then he would sprint on.”

The audience can never fully warm to Barnhardt as he seems to be a character forever on the edge, if not somewhat over it.

While there are reasons for viewers to feel sympathy for him, such as his unrequited love for Brandi, there always seems to be a darker side to his persona that could explode at any time.

Rogen plays the role well and his scenes with the mall security team provide the film’s best comedy moments – the highlight undoubtedly being the drug-fuelled retribution Barnhardt and Dennis (a particularly camp Michael Pena) deliver to the skateboarders plaguing the shopping centre’s car park.

There are occasions when you think the film may overstep the mark – such as the worrying scene where Barnhardt spends the night with an intoxicated Brandi – but Hill manages to drag the momentum back just in time and there are more than enough laughs here to keep the audience entertained throughout.

● *Observe and Report* is available to own now on Blu-Ray and DVD. ■

From surfers in shark-less seas to a couple of cracking competitions, check out October’s film round-up...

Win: Looking for Eric on Blu-Ray

FOOTBALL legend **Eric Cantona** makes his big screen return in *Looking For Eric*. The former-Manchester United man is back to inspire a down on his luck postman in this feel-good British film from acclaimed director **Ken Loach**, out on DVD and Blu-Ray from October 12. *Soldier* has teamed up with Icon Home Entertainment to offer four readers a chance to win a copy of the film on Blu-Ray. To enter, answer the following question: **From which English club did Manchester United sign Eric Cantona?** Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk).

Closing date October 30



Street Fighter, out to own on DVD now

STREET Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li boasts an impressive cast including **Kristin Kreuk** (*Smallville*), **Michael Clarke Duncan** (*Green Mile*) and **Chris Klein** (*American Pie*) and follows the rise of Chun Li from a concert pianist to powerful vigilante. With as many fights as the title could possibly offer, it also provides Chris Klein with an opportunity to show why he should definitely stick to starring in teen comedies. This title makes an unfortunate attempt at being an epic superhero movie, but ultimately fails to deliver. Despite its promise, this is a disappointing episode for the *Street Fighter* series.

Pte Peter Joyes, R Anglian



Splinter, out to own on DVD now

A GRITTY Los Angeles gangster thriller revolving around a Hispanic gang member with a dose of amnesia who is trying to avenge the death of his brother, while simultaneously piecing together the events that led to the murder. The real strength of the film lies in **Tom Sizemore’s** excellent portrayal of a temperamental, alcoholic LA cop who has little interest until mutilated bodies start to emerge in the area. The film was slightly reminiscent of *The Wire* and did a good job of keeping my attention, despite featuring some acting that even Pinocchio would consider too wooden. Watchable.

Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)





Badge of honour: Funnyman Seth Rogen battles to outdo “proper” policeman Ray Liotta as the pair embark on a mall manhunt in *Observe and Report*

Waveriders, out to own on DVD now

THIS surf-fest is a feature-length documentary consisting of Irish surfers talking about surfing, the history of surfing and featuring lots of footage of, well, surfers surfing. It tells the story of the Irish-Hawaiian lifeguard who is credited with being the “father of modern surfing” and makes the link with a recent resurgence of the sport in Ireland. While I was initially very impressed with the cinematography capturing the surfers doing their thing on the waves, I quickly reached the limit of my interest and became disappointed with the lack of sharks in the Irish Sea. Not for everyone, but a must for all surf dudes.

Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)



Jack Said, out on DVD from October 5

THIS British-made film really got under my skin. Jack’s dark, sarcastic, violent and morally-questionable double life as an undercover copper ticks most boxes. In way too deep and starting to mentally unravel, he is tasked to carry out a series of increasingly dubious errands by both his police masters and an East End gangster family he has managed to infiltrate. While not quite punchy enough to make it onto the big screen, Jack’s revenge is well-played out and served ice cold. I waited for a twist in the plot and thought I was going to be disappointed but I never saw that ending coming.

Capt Neil Johnson, AAC



Win: Big Fat Important Movie prizes

TRYING its best to poke fun at as many people as possible, this satire follows obnoxious director Michael Malone – who looks suspiciously like real-life film maker **Michael Moore** – and his efforts to organise a “Ban the fourth of July” parade. *Soldier* has a copy of the movie and a DVD player to watch it on for one lucky winner and copies of the film for three runners-up. To stand a chance of winning, answer this question: **What was the name of Moore’s film about guns and violence in the US?** Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk).

Closing date October 30





Conventional ops: United States Marines face the might of an Asian superpower in the latest *Operation Flashpoint* title

Chinese takeaway

Communist forces occupy island outpost as tactical shooter enters a new era

Preview: Cliff Caswell

WHEN software publisher Codemasters released the first *Operation Flashpoint* game back in 2001, it marked a significant departure from the traditional military first-person shooter.

With the action taking place on a sprawling battlefield and set against the backdrop of the Cold War, the game differed from its contemporaries in one important respect – one well-placed enemy shot could take you down. In short, players were made mortal and had to think before they acted.

The realism of the title was not everyone's cup of tea. But for those who embraced the one-bullet-equals-game-over concept, *Operation Flashpoint* became a cult title. With the opportunity to mix it with the enemy in multiplayer mayhem, it was a virtual warrior's heaven.

Now Codemasters has aimed to preserve the integrity of the title in its sequel, *Dragon Rising*. Abandoning 1980s theatre Europe for a contemporary Far East setting, the latest game pits a battalion of United States Marines against

a force of Chinese troops who have invaded and taken over an island.

Armed with assault rifles, explosives and a raft of support weapons, players can define their own military specialism and are pitted against a ruthless enemy that has been brought to life with the help of a team of expert military advisers.

"We used guys who had served in both the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and the British Army to help with the tactical side of the game," said Tim Browne, senior games designer with Codemasters. "Although soldiers from the two nations have different outlooks and attitudes, the combination worked on *Operation Flashpoint* because they basically do the job in a similar way.

"The reason we chose the USMC as the subject of *Dragon Rising* is that they have a lot of toys that you can play with and we had access to a lot of the kit they use.

"It was more difficult to get hold of the Chinese weapons, although we did manage to look at some video footage. Our team also did a fantastic job of recording the audio for the guns – we did a lot of this work on a firing range in Nevada."

The efforts of those behind *Dragon Rising* are certainly obvious. *Soldier* joined a multiplayer demo of an early level and was impressed with the

quality of the graphics and gameplay that sets a new standard for tactical shooters.

Anyone expecting a *Call of Duty* experience should take note – *Operation Flashpoint* does not reward foolish heroics and there is no retreat-and-be-healed feature. In addition, there are plenty of other realistic touches to cause you trouble. When you call in an air or artillery strike, for example, it takes time to arrive.

"The weapons featured in the game also take time to reload, so you have to think about this in battle. With the Javelin missile, you have to make sure that you have enough time to arm the missile and fall back before you commit to taking a shot," said Browne.

This is certainly true. During a mission as a demolitions expert, *Soldier* was tasked with zapping an enemy comms mast. A foolish squandering of ammunition and reckless charge across open ground ended our first effort after less than three minutes of play. *Dragon Rising* does not take prisoners.

Yet this is also the beauty of the game. In the finest traditions of the *Operation Flashpoint* series, this title rewards the tactical thinker rather than those with the reflexes of a hyperactive eight-year-old. *Dragon Rising* could yet be a classic. ■

From stylish B-movies to Bob Kayne's superhero legend – a round up of this month's console contenders...

Wet, Xbox 360 & PS3

WITH Quentin Tarantino currently unleashing his latest movie onto cinema screens, now is definitely the most appropriate time to release this homage to the director of Hollywood's most violent films. *Wet* is a martial arts actioner in the style of *Kill Bill*, putting players in the boots of a sexy female assassin charged with carving her way through a legion of opponents. Kitted out with a variety of firearms and a samurai sword, your role is to wipe out as many enemy combatants as you can in as classy a way as possible. You can slow down time – à la *Max Payne* – by honing acrobatic moves. *Wet* is a superb beat 'em up that oozes class.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Mario and Sonic, Wii

FOLLOWING a successful outing to China last summer, Sega and Nintendo's flagship characters have joined forces again for *Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games*. Graphics on the latest offering have been considerably enhanced while the incorporation of the Wii Balance Board helps make events such as the bobsleigh and snowboarding infinitely more interesting. *Mario and Sonic* is extremely good, clean family fun. This game should also make mess evenings an interesting affair if you can get a few residents together for a competitive session accompanied by a few beers.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Madden 10, Xbox 360 & PS3

EA SPORTS' latest stab at the impenetrable world of American Football returns in the latest – and best-to-date – incarnation of the *John Madden* franchise. The presentation is top notch and does a good job of replicating a television broadcast – unfortunately even down to advertisements and product placement, which can prove to be tiresome at times. Some of the plays are as complicated as ever, but it's worth sticking at for the deeply satisfying feeling of nailing a 40-yard throw or smashing an opponent. Despite the drawbacks, *Madden 10* is good stuff even for those with only a passing interest in the sport.

Stephen Tyler, *Soldier*





Elite combination: Sumptuous graphics, beautifully-rendered environments and fluid tactical gameplay make *Dragon Rising* a winner

Arkham Asylum, Xbox 360 & PS3

FROM the outset it is obvious that this latest foray into the world of the iconic superhero is going to be a quality offering. Set amid the menacing surroundings of the Arkham Asylum, the caped crusader's job is to recapture arch super villain the Joker, who is on the loose and creating mayhem. With fantastic graphics, and audio featuring the voices of characters from the *Batman* animated series, the game incorporates all the mythology of the comic strip but will easily impress the more casual superhero fan with its mixture of puzzle-solving and combat. All-in-all this is a superb game and highly recommended.

James Hamilton



WIN: Nintendo Wii and Mad Dog McCree

THIS month we have a superb prize for anyone who fancies their chances as a Wild West gunslinger. *Soldier* has a copy of the *Mad Dog McCree* trilogy, which has been remixed for the Wii. And if you don't have the console, fear not – we have one to give away too. *Mad Dog* proved an arcade classic throughout the 1990s and the Wii versions are imported from originals. To stand a chance of winning, answer this question: Who is credited with killing Billy the Kid? Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk). Closing date is October 30.

Courtesy of Majesco Entertainment



Mini Ninjas, Xbox 360 & PS3

A DECENT third-person adventure that should please audiences of all ages, *Mini Ninjas* gives players the responsibility for taking down an evil warlord who has been transforming the wildlife kingdom into an army of darkness and is threatening to take over the world. The manga-style graphics are first class, with the rolling countryside, rivers and snow-capped mountains giving the game a suitably Japanese atmosphere. *Mini Ninjas* has a fun plot, some interesting puzzles to solve and a fast-paced combat system that is easy to learn. This title is a respectable offering that will fill more than a few hours of gameplay.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*





Spelling test: Scandinavian songsters Alphabeat have moved on from their pop roots to a more electronic sound for their new album

Pop goes the beat

Scandinavian six-piece changes direction and moves to a more dynamic sound

Interview: Heidi Mines

THEY have traditionally had a reputation for producing middle-of-the-road pop tunes, but Danish band Alphabeat are confident that a change of image will save their bacon.

Returning with a second album and edgier sound, the six-piece have gone through something of a reinvention process. Gone are the safe, Deacon Blue-esque, melodic tunes; and in their place is a more unconventional style with gritty overtones.

Largely due to a change in record label – from EMI to Polydor – the group have also axed their rigid duet format and allowed lead singer Stine Bramsen more of her own input.

And the band, which is best known for top-ten hits *Fascination* and *10,000 Nights*, is hoping that the change in direction will help build on the success they have enjoyed in continental Europe. They already have a fine reputation for their live performances and hope their energetic shows will perfectly complement their new material.

The radical overhaul was certainly apparent when *Soldier* caught up with Stine, who had just

returned from a salon with a dramatic new look. But the pint-sized, 22-year-old stunner is more than just an expensive haircut. She has been singing since she was a toddler and confesses that being a vocalist has been her only ambition.

"I changed my image because I was getting so tired of being called cute, and to be honest that is not the sort of person I am," said the charity worker-turned-pop star. "So I dyed my hair jet black and now I am trying out a vibrant red."

"Image aside, we really didn't want to compromise on this album at all. I think that the songs suit my voice a lot more and I am really excited about the new record. I have sung on a lot of the tracks and think it has worked well."

The last of the six members to join the group, Stine insists that there is a no romance rule with her bandmates, simply stating that it is "just not practical" due to the amount of time they have to spend together and the pressures of the job.

Life has certainly been hectic. In order to launch their attempt to break into the UK music industry the band rented a flat in London. The move paid off and they earned a gold disc for their first album *This is Alphabeat*, which sold more than 100,000 copies.

But new offering *The Spell*, which is due to be

released later this year, has more of a retro-feel, featuring catchy tracks such as *Heart Failure* and *DJ* that share some similarities with 1990s dance acts such as Snap and Black Box.

"This record is much more electronic and I would say that we have brought ourselves up to date," said Stine, adding that the band's lyrics are always penned in English as pop music has to be delivered in a "universal language".

"It is very important to us that we write all our own songs and music. For the new recording we sat down and used the computer to help us develop the album."

Stine also admitted that she has a huge respect for British soldiers fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, who have been working closely with their Danish counterparts. She said the band certainly wouldn't rule out playing a gig in Helmand province.

"I would definitely describe myself as a tomboy and most of my friends are guys. But I definitely could never be a soldier – I'm far too much of a wimp for that," she added.

"But if the troops listen to our music in their down time and it helps them to chill out then that is great. I think it would be amazing to play for them on the front line." ■

From the Baddies' impressive debut to veteran Whitney's comeback, we track this month's releases...

Do the Job, Baddies

THIS brand new quartet of rockers from Southend in Essex have played a blinder with a brilliant debut album. The energetic, foot-tapping sound has elements of



The Jam and **Manic Street Preachers** with a helping of groove from early **Red Hot Chili Peppers** thrown in for good measure. *Do The Job* certainly does the business and is full of catchy riffs, funky rhythms and powerful choruses. **Baddies** are bound to be a festival favourite in the coming year and this album is the perfect introduction to them. All in all, this is one of the best debut albums I've heard since **Kings of Leon** released *Youth and Young Manhood*. Go out and buy it!

Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC

Made in Texas, Toadies

ALTHOUGH **Toadies** have been around for some time, their new album *Made in Texas* was my introduction to the band – and a very pleasant first meeting it was too. Upbeat, grungy rock with a definite hint of the 1990s, the tracks on this great album feature tight and crunchy guitars, strong, gravel-filled vocals and some really catchy hooks. Toadies have succeeded where many bands have failed by producing a very brave, bold, bare-knuckle sound without falling into the trap of delivering an audio monster. My only criticism is that the album contains only six tracks and left me wanting. Fans of the genre will not be disappointed and should definitely check this release out.



Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)

I Look to You, Whitney Houston

WHITNEY Houston is back with her first studio album since 2002. The diva of soul is most famous for her 1993 hit record *I Will Always Love You*, which spent 20 weeks at the top spot in the UK. *I Look To You* immediately entered the US album charts at number one with more than 300,000 sales. *Soldier* has five copies of the album to give away. To stand a chance of getting your hands on one, just answer this question: **What was the name of the 1993 movie Whitney starred in with Kevin Costner?** Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by October 30.



Courtesy of Sony BMG

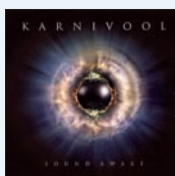


Alphabetical order: Anders B, Stine Bramsen, Troels Hansen, Rasmus Nagel, Anders Reinholdt and Anders SG are the heart of the beat

Sound Awake, Karnivool

SOUND Awake is Australian five-piece **Karnivool's** second album and absolutely proves beyond all reasonable doubt what the group is capable of. This is a fearless rock outfit set to make a real impact on the scene way beyond their Perth homeland. The album has it all for progressive rock fans: heady riffs, melodic and exceptional vocals, serious bass, successful experimental tracks and a variety of different styles throughout. I predict that the album will not appeal to a more mainstream audience, but hardcore rock fans will fully appreciate the band's ingenious and progressive style on this very solid and impressive album. This is well worth a listen.

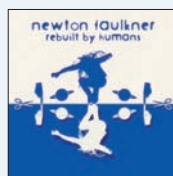
Capt James Vincent, RLC



Rebuilt by Humans, Newton Faulkner

BRIT Award-nominated **Newton Faulkner** has made a fantastic comeback with his eagerly anticipated album *Rebuilt By Humans*. The musician has also announced a 14-date tour, which kicks off at the beginning of the month in Dublin, Ireland. His debut record, *Hand Built By Robots*, spent nearly a year in the UK Top 40 album chart and his latest release is sure to follow. The talented artist has a knack of engaging with his listeners. My firm favourites are the tracks *If This Is It* – the first single to be released from the new album – and *Won't Let Go*. Anyone who enjoys chilled-out tunes with meaningful lyrics will love this new offering which is very highly recommended.

Heidi Mines, Soldier



Locked Out, Nine Black Alps

NINE Black Alps return with their third studio album, *Locked Out From the Inside*. And the latest offering from this Manchester quartet certainly has a live feel about it. Having cut their teeth supporting the likes of **Kaiser Chiefs**, **Weezer** and more recently **Biffy Clyro**, it will come as no surprise that they have gone for a raw style. The set of songs showcased are a throwback to the days when grunge-rock ruled. And the track *Every Photograph Steals Your Soul* illustrates the point. Although there is no standout song, *Bay of Angels*, with its array of guitar melodies, does provide a strong case. This is an impressive effort but not the big seller they will crave.

Steve King, MoD





Trip down memory lane:
Wharton knits together first-hand accounts of those who served in Ulster during the darkest days of the Troubles

Province portrait

Tales of Troubles past paint vivid picture of British Army ops in Northern Ireland

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

HAVING been nudged into the shadows of memory banks by the conflict in southern Iraq, the Troubles are returned to the fore by Ken Wharton's account of a once seemingly endless war against terrorism.

A flashback to the daily lives of the British soldiers who deployed to Northern Ireland on Operations Motor Man and Banner, *Bullets, Bombs and Cups of Tea* revisits notorious areas such as Bogside, the Ballymurphy estate, Turf Lodge and the bandit country of South Armagh.

Instantly familiar locations to all those who served in the Province, these hot spots were rarely out of the news headlines during the Troubles and repeatedly played host to British units.

And with these place names once central to the Army's vocabulary, it is perhaps unsurprising that the author leaves much of the talking to veterans of the campaigns.

Packed with anecdotal first-hand accounts from across the rank spectrum and cap badges, this oral history sets out to capture the reality

of fighting an unseen enemy who viewed every British soldier and, at times, their families as walking targets.

Claiming the lives of 730 Servicemen and women, these insurgents grew in sophistication with every passing day and are acknowledged in the book as wily adversaries.

One soldier told Wharton: "The IRA was not a motley crew of red-haired country bumpkins with charming picture book Irish accents and armed with obsolete World War One weapons.

"They were an implacable, increasingly professional, terrorist organisation, backed in the main by the Irish-Americans and they were very good at doing what they did best – killing us."

It is by way of these soldiers' stories that the book is able to delve deep into the darker side of life during the war in Northern Ireland.

The author has gone beyond the mainstream and included the tragedy and trauma suffered by the many bereaved Service families who lost their loved ones.

Among the numerous, wide-ranging accounts are episodes of friendliness, violence, danger and tragedy. Amid the barrage of taunts, petrol bombs and insults there are also some classic examples of British military humour and resilience.

The style of the book is deliberately grass roots and succeeds in its primary aim of projecting the soldier's view of the Province and the complexities of fighting terrorism on home soil.

This tone is reinforced with a series of photographs taken on ops and donated by contributing soldiers.

Using his own intimate knowledge of the region, Wharton has linked hundreds of accounts together in a logical and engaging manner. Although not intended as a history of the operation, this lengthy narrative is compelling and encompasses every facet of soldiering in a campaign in which the British Army had to be lucky everyday, but the terrorists only had to be lucky once.

Indeed, *Bullets, Bombs and Cups of Tea* is closer to being a full portrait of the soldiers' experience than a snap-shot.

Those interviewed have told their stories in the frankest fashion – a fitting testimony to the 300,000 soldiers that carried out what was for many a thankless task in the streets and ditches of Northern Ireland.

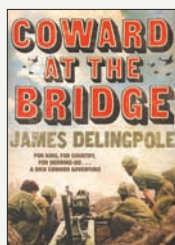
A weighty read, but a must for anybody wanting to gain some insight into the thinking of the soldier of the not-too-distant past. ■

From a brush with a nubile nymphomaniac to sparring with the Spanish, a scan of this month's literary releases...

Coward at the Bridge by James Delingpole

THIS second instalment of the war stories of Lt Dick Coward begins with our hero locked in a cupboard with a 17-year-old nymphomaniac and goes on to chronicle his adventures throughout the mayhem of Operation Market Garden. Told in a similar tongue-in-cheek style to *The Flashman Papers*, **Delingpole** had me laughing out loud at the incredible exploits of Coward and his sidekick Sgt Price – a wartime double act worthy of comparison with *Jeeves and Wooster*. These are the tales you wish your grandfather had told you. Delingpole is a master storyteller who commands your full attention to the final page.

Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH



Kitchener's Lost Boys by John Oakes

FROM 1914-1918 vast numbers of teenagers joined the British Army. Their fates and the execution of deserters by firing squad have been much written about recently. This thoughtful book, based on a breadth of research, covers the former in detail, the latter more briefly and a variety of other pertinent subjects. The background, war service and post-war experiences of young officers and men are discussed with insight and compassion. There are a few mistakes – Lord Roberts did not lead the Chitral relief column – but these detract little from the overall high quality.

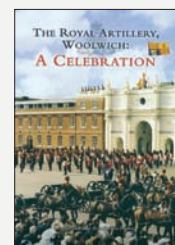
Dr Rodney Atwood



A Celebration edited by Brig Ken Timbers

THIS superbly produced coffee table book is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and the close association it had with Woolwich for 291 years. **Brig Ken Timbers** has drawn together both historical facts and personal reminiscences to tell a fascinating story in a highly-readable fashion. Richly illustrated with photographs and maps, many of which have never before been published and are drawn from the regiment's own archives, the book is a joy to read. The clearly defined sections allow the reader to dip in and out of the book at their leisure.

Philip Jobson, Royal Artillery Association

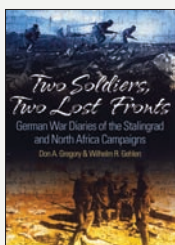




Window on war: Firebombed vehicles and armed British soldiers in full riot gear were once commonplace on the streets of Northern Ireland

Two Soldiers, Two Lost Fronts

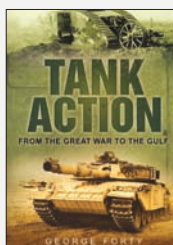
FROM freezing Russian plains to baking hot desert, **Don Gregory** and **Wilhelm Gehlen** use first-hand German accounts to provide a fascinating insight into the mentality of the conscript soldier. The diaries used are fairly straight-laced, but there is the odd interjection of humour (for example tankies ensuring their hatches are well-oiled for quick opening in case of crew members passing wind). It is refreshing to hear history in the context of the first person and this book would make an excellent accompaniment to any mainstream history of either the Africa or Russia campaigns of the Second World War.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC

Tank Action by George Forty

IF you could hand-pick an author to write a book on the greatest tank battles of the 20th Century then you would be hard-pushed to find anyone better than the once-curator of Bovington's Tank Museum, **George Forty**. Thankfully, the man in question did not need any prompting and *Tank Action* is that book. Detailed and engaging, Forty goes beyond the simple descriptive nature of similar titles and uses battles as case studies to help the reader understand the development of tank warfare. Anyone with more than a passing interest in military history should have this title on their reference shelf.



Maj Neil Powell, AGC

Fire Over the Rock by James Falkner

THIS cracking read describes a military epic – the three-year Spanish siege of the “Fortress”. Beautifully written and illustrated, the many diary accounts bring to life the exhilaration, daring, boredom, danger and privations of the besieged garrison and its inhabitants. **Falkner** sites the reader as a well-placed observer of the drama as if high on the Rock. This book will appeal to sappers, gunners and the Royal Navy as the siege was fought with the then cutting-edge of technology – fortifications, gunnery and sail power. Great military reading which will appeal to all those who have served on Gibraltar.



Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Hardcore: Dell's ruggedised Latitude E6400 XFR laptop withstood *Soldier's* scientific tests. Visit www.dell.com/xfr for more details

It's PC gone mad!

Soldier shuns health and safety brigade to put Dell's sturdy laptop to the test

Review: Richard Long

IN the unforgiving office environment, ballistic armour is a key consideration for the desk-bound worker pondering which laptop to spend their hard-earned wages on.

With countless stationery-related accidents just waiting to happen, the need for impenetrable protection is obvious and often vital.

But help is now at hand courtesy of computer-giant Dell and its latest innovation in the world of ruggedised laptops – the Latitude E6400 XFR.

In all seriousness, this kit is designed to withstand the demands of terrain far more testing than a stuffy office building and its Herculean strength suggests it is ideally suited for military use on the front line.

With boasts of being able to sustain pounding rain, blowing dust and extreme temperatures, *Soldier* decided to put the XFR to the test. With a trip to Afghanistan for a laptop review out of the question, we donned body armour and headed out into the harsh environment and barren surroundings of leafy Surrey.

So confident in its machine's resilience were

Dell that the company provided us with a number of challenges for the laptop, all of which simulate the difficulties it could encounter out in the field.

A simple drop is probably the most common accident for any laptop-user to suffer, but the usual foot-high falls that most computers can withstand are small change for the Latitude, which comfortably survived tumbles of three feet and then four feet into thick grass.

Having completed the rigorous scientific test to the letter, *Soldier* booted up the machine to be greeted by the familiar Windows theme and the computer was ready for business.

Our appetite for destruction continued with the next experiment, which saw us dropping golf balls onto the 14-inch LCD screen.

But as we braced for the sound of the inevitable crack, the Dell again flexed its muscles as each ball safely rebounded, leaving the screen intact and the operating system running at full speed.

With the drops successfully completed without leaving so much as a scratch, it was time for the armour-clad laptop to pit its formidable wits against the elements.

Desert-like swirling sandstorms are not exactly a common occurrence in Surrey, but the combination of a three-tonne sand heap and a

petrol-powered leaf blower provided us with the ideal environment for our wind-driven test.

With sand blowing across the display the machine surprisingly functioned as normal and when the grains were replaced by a blast from a hosepipe the laptop powered on without fear.

Dell has equipped this model with a ballistic armour protection system designed to meet and even exceed real world military standards.

The unit itself is far weightier than its weaker, mainstream contemporaries, but to provide this level of protection the extra bulk is inevitable.

It is the first laptop of its class to offer Intel Core 2 Duo processors with vPro technology and can be fitted with up to 8GB of memory.

And in experiments conducted outside the *Soldier* laboratory the XFR has proved it is capable of operating in temperatures ranging from -29 to 63 degrees celsius while surviving humidity of up to 95 per cent.

If you are in need of a rugged laptop – and have a spare £2,699 burning a hole in your pocket – then the XFR warrants serious consideration.

● ***Soldier* wants recruits to put top gear through its paces. Apply to the editor by emailing styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk** ■

Soldier takes a closer look at some of Panasonic's hard-as-nails ruggedised laptops...

Panasonic CF-52

NOT all computer users need a machine that will keep going in the harshest of sandstorms, so the semi-ruggedised CF-52 is a decent entry-level model. The 15.4-inch screen is protected from sudden shock by a series of dampers and a magnesium case, while data is protected in a foam-encased hard drive which is capable of absorbing heavy blows. As with all ruggedised laptops, the CF-52 is heavier than its softer-skinned contemporaries, but the 3.4kg weight is still more than manageable. Elsewhere, a splash-resistant keyboard and touchpad prevent water from entering the casing.



www.toughbook.eu, £1,208

Panasonic CF-19

PITCHED in the middle of the ruggedised range, the CF-19 has an extra trick up its sleeve to separate it from its muscle-bound competition. As well as opening like any other laptop, this silver-clad marvel's screen can be rotated through 180 degrees and folded flat against the case so that the scratch-resistant LCD surface faces upwards. As well as looking cool, using the laptop like a tablet PC makes it easier to carry. An energy-efficient battery provides up to nine hours of power from just one charge, and a double-waterproof structure protects the computer from liquid and dust.



www.toughbook.eu, £2,308

Panasonic CF-30

LEAVING you with less than a couple of hundred pounds change from £3,000, the CF-30 is designed to withstand the punishment dished out by the same military standards as the Dell. Ultra-modern features include a touchscreen display, Intel Core 2 Duo processor and high-power battery, but the laptop's ability to cope with the elements make it ideal for military use. A hard drive heater makes it able to cope with extreme cold and its anti-reflective silver painting prevents heat absorption in sunnier climes. Tight seals on joins and external covers keep out water and dust, making this a top pick for outdoor use.



www.toughbook.eu, £2,858



Sand storm: *Soldier* assistant editor Richard Long puts Dell's armour-clad Latitude E6400 XFR laptop to the test against the harsh elements of rural Surrey

Test one: Waterproof?

POUNDING rain is enough to leave anyone running for cover. But for a hardy customer like the XFR, such weather is water off a duck's back. *Soldier* tested this rugged laptop's ability to keep water out of its expensive innards with a heavy dousing from a hosepipe and we can report the deluge did little, if anything, to affect performance. The downpour certainly soaked the operator, but the XFR's remarkable case meant that no water was able to seep into the system. And with the Windows software firing on all cylinders, we were able to make an early start on the review while waiting for sunnier intervals.



Score: 8/10

Test two: Screen break

GOLF balls were designed for driving down the fairways, not bouncing off computer screens. However, in the world of Dell they play a key role in the rigorous testing of rugged laptops. The company promised its solid system would remain intact after a direct strike from the aforementioned ball dropped from a height of 30 inches. *Soldier* dropped the small missile, bellowed "fore" and looked away, waiting for the inevitable screen smash to follow. But the savage attack was no match for the LCD, which remained brightly illuminated as the ball bounced away into the deep rough.



Score: 10/10

Test three: Falling down

DROPPING a laptop on the ground from a height of four feet is enough to short circuit most portable computers. But thanks to the ballistic armour and PrimoSeal technology of the XFR, which surrounds the machine in a seemingly-impenetrable shell, such accidents are nothing more than minor irritations. After releasing the unit from its tight grip *Soldier* was expecting to find a cracked laptop sporting ruthlessly exposed circuit boards among the wreckage at its feet. Instead, we leaned forward to wipe the dirt off the machine and stood astounded as it effortlessly burst into life at the touch of a button.



Score: 9/10



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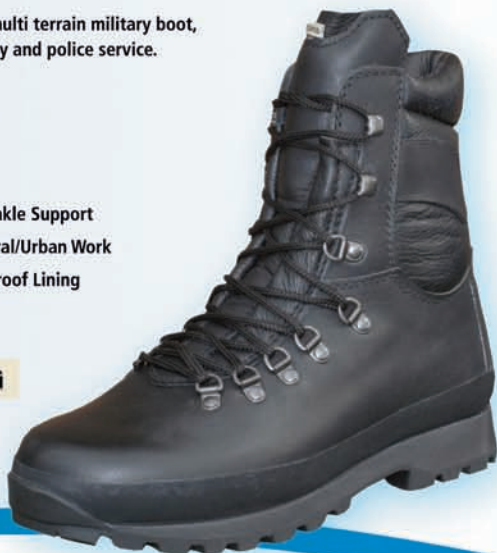
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SOLDIERSPORT

A full-page photograph of two soldiers, Spr MJ Brightly and Cpl Dale Crossley, wading through dark water. They are both wearing black wetsuits with red accents, red helmets, and red shorts. The soldier on the left is holding a white wakeboard under his arm, and the soldier on the right is also holding a wakeboard. They are both looking towards the camera. The background shows a cloudy sky and some distant structures.

CABLE GUYS
Army boarders
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Chairmen of the board:
Spr MJ Brightly (RE)
and Cpl Dale Crossley
(RE) helped the Army
win the Inter-Services
wakeboarding crown

Picture: Graeme Main



White hot lane

Tottenham centre back Dawson spills the beans on Spurs' sizzling start

Interview: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

TO describe the past year at Tottenham Hotspur as a roller coaster ride would be somewhat of an understatement.

Rewind 12 months and the club was marooned at the bottom of the league with whispers of relegation becoming louder and louder.

With just two points on the board from their opening eight Premiership matches, Spurs sacked manager Juande Ramos and turned to Harry Redknapp as the man to lead their survival bid.

The arrival of the former West Ham and Portsmouth boss brought about an

immediate change in fortunes and now, almost a year later, aspirations of survival have been replaced by thoughts of a top four challenge.

Speaking after Spurs took maximum points from their opening three matches, defender Michael Dawson told *SoldierSport* about life at the top of the table.

"It is amazing," he said. "It has been a great start for the club and long may it continue.

"Last year we had the worst possible start. We brought in quality players and we had a quality side but we were just not performing as individuals or as a team.

"But this year we managed to beat Liverpool in our opening match and it

has given us so much confidence."

With Spurs riding high the club has given its backing to Tickets for Troops, a Conservative Party initiative that will see free matchday entry offered to Servicemen and women.

"It is great that the club shows support to the soldiers," said 25-year-old Dawson at Spurs' training ground.

"It is fantastic what they do for the country and they give up an awful lot to go away and fight.

"When they go you pray for the families that they come back safe and sound. We all realise what they are giving up and for Tottenham to be supporting this scheme, and giving them tickets, is great. I think they thoroughly deserve it."

The former England U21 captain added: "I live near Catterick and when you go over the moors you see the Army guys training.

"When you consider the sacrifices they make and what could happen when they go away you have to give great credit to them.

"I would just say a big thank you and good luck, hopefully they come back safe and well."

While his team has been excelling it has been a frustrating start to the season for Dawson.

The former Nottingham Forest star was injured during pre-season and was on the road to recovery when he spoke to *SoldierSport*.

"I got an achilles tear. It came at the

worst possible time as that is when you get your fitness base for the season," he explained.

"It will be around four weeks until I am fully fit and available for selection but the lads are playing well and if they keep winning it is easy for the manager to pick the team.

"When I made my debut nearly five years ago it was through someone else's misfortune.

"Football can be awful like that but for others it is an opportunity. When you get that opportunity you have to take it.

"We have got Woody (Jonathan Woodgate), Ledley (Ledley King), Seb (Sebastien Bassong) and myself, that's four good defenders fighting for two positions and competition like that is what you need."

After such a good start many pundits are now asking if Spurs, along with the likes of Manchester City, can compete with the traditional powerhouses of English football.

"Our aim is to finish in the top four but it is very hard to break through," Dawson said.

"We have to aim at that, if it does not happen we need to be in the top six as that means qualifying for Europe again. You always have to set your goals as high as you can.

"In the last two seasons we have had two trips to Wembley. If we can win a cup it would be great."

● Further details about the Tickets for Troops initiative were unavailable at the time of going to press. ■

'Our aim is to finish in the top four but it is very hard to break through'



Welsh wonder: The direct running of fullback Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) was decisive in the Army's close-fought win over the Royal Air Force at Aldershot

Narrow win for resilient Reds

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

A SOLO try from LCpl Modje Matau (RE) was the highlight of a close-fought victory for the Army in the opening match of their Inter-Services Rugby League campaign.

The rampant centre broke through two tackles to collect a high kick and charge to the line for a score that helped the Reds to a narrow 16-14 win over the Royal Air Force at Aldershot.

Both teams showed strong defence and solid running in the early exchanges but the Army broke the deadlock when left wing LCpl Tim Tamani (REME) finished a cross-field move to touchdown in the corner.

Matau doubled the tally with his moment of magic before the RAF struck back through Cpl Jimmy Bargett, who crashed through to score with three defenders on his back.

The hard-hitting and excellent running continued in the second half and the airmen drew level through a try from SAC Gareth Evans.

But Kgn Bav Bavou (2 Lances) restored the advantage when he collected a neat pass from Matau and held off two tacklers to power home.

Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) added the decisive conversion that opened a

six-point advantage for the Army.

The pace of the game became more frenetic as both sides pushed for further points and with 20 minutes remaining Evans crossed for his second try.

But the RAF failed to convert the extras and the Army clung on for a backs-to-the-wall victory in the face of mounting pressure.

Speaking after the final whistle,

ARMY 16 - 14 ROYAL AIR FORCE

Army: Cummings; Kama; Matau; Gregory; Tamani; Slade-Jones; Fanning; Silvester (c); Kay; Lodge; Taylor; Bavou; Winn.

Subs: MacKenzie; Windle; Smart; Vave.

Tries: Matau; Tamani; Bavou.

Conversions: Cummings (2).

SoldierSport man of the match: Pte Gareth Lodge (Para, right)





Comeback king

PTE Isoa Damudamu is a man on a mission having spent six months on the sidelines with a dislocated shoulder.

The Rugby Union ace suffered the agonising injury while on duty with the England Sevens team in Hong Kong and is set to return to the field to continue his pursuit of Army and international glory.

For Damudamu (17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC, pictured) the setback was a flashback to 2008, when the Fijian-born back row forward dislocated his other shoulder.

The comeback has provided a stern test for the 28-year-old, but the support offered at Headley Court has given him every chance of returning to the top.

"It is great – the physiotherapists, the hydropool, everything is fantastic," Damudamu told *SoldierSport*.

"I had daily programmes on the upper limbs course and I was involved with some of the soldiers who have been injured on operations.

"I got on really well with the guys. It was a bit difficult as my injuries were from sport while they were injured at war but we worked well together.

"It [the injury] really got me down but I have nearly recovered and I cannot wait to get started."

Damudamu made his international debut in 2006 and has just secured a new contract to become a professional England Sevens player while continuing to serve in the Army.

Maj Mick Morton (17 Port and Maritime Regt), who helped him to negotiate the deal, said: "This allows him to continue to be a soldier for seven months of the year and an England player for the rest.

"The national team manager has said he is one of the best Sevens players in the world and there are huge benefits of having Damudamu playing for

England in terms of the Army's profile."

With progress now being made on the injury front Damudamu is determined to make up for lost time.

"I just want to play well for my regiment first then hopefully I can get back in with the Army, although there is great depth in that team," he said.

"I have had a training and fitness camp with England and I will see what happens, but it is great to be back." ■



a relieved head coach Maj Rich Naivalarua (REME) told *SoldierSport*: "I am very pleased with the outcome considering it was such a tight game.

"Full time brought a certain amount of relief as we had put ourselves under a lot of pressure, we had to tough it out and we did not buckle."

Six players made their Inter-Services debuts in the match and Naivalarua believes the Army now has one of its strongest squads in recent years.

The Reds were due to lock horns with the Royal Navy as this issue went to press and the head coach was determined to avenge the 40-18 defeat inflicted on his side in 2008.

"The Navy are going to be a very difficult team to beat. They dominated us in the contact last year and we hope to reverse that this time round," added Naivalarua. "My ideal outcome would be to not only win but give them a taste of what happened to us last year."

● A try inside the first two minutes helped the women's team to a 54-4 win over the RAF, while the Army's development team thumped their light blue counterparts 100-0 in the day's earlier matches. ■

It's grim up north

THE Army suffered an early exit in its pursuit of the Carnegie Floodlit Nines title in Leeds.

An opening 10-4 victory over the Royal Navy left the Service ideally placed to qualify for the second round but they slipped up against a strong Blackpool Panthers side in their second match.

The Reds took an early lead against the winners of the Northern Rail Nines but Blackpool hit back with tries either side of the interval to establish a decisive 8-4 lead.

That defeat left the Army relying on a Navy victory in the final group match to have any chance of qualifying but the sailors suffered a comprehensive 18-0 defeat that saw both Services eliminated.

Head coach Maj Rich Naivalarua (REME) was pleased with his side's efforts despite crashing out at a disappointingly early stage.

He told *SoldierSport*: "We are an amateur team and it is a great privilege to be invited to events like this.

"We beat the Navy, which I am always happy about, and then we only just lost out to Blackpool.

"There is a long way to go but this tournament has given us great experience."

Gnr Andy Kay (RA) and Kgn Bav Bavou (2 Lancs) impressed for


the Reds and both went on to make their Inter-Services debuts last month on the back of their performances in Leeds.

Hull FC defeated Leeds Rhinos 16-11 in the tournament's final. ■



Defeat: Blackpool beat the Army (in white)

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Davis' new dawn

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH the boxing season now in full swing, new Army coach Sgt Tony Davis' (APTC) credentials will be tested to the full.

The 35-year-old (pictured) faces the daunting prospect of continuing a proud run of 26 consecutive Combined Services titles while pushing his fighters for national squad selections that could see them starring in the Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

But Davis is no stranger to the sport, being a former England international and Amateur Boxing Association champion who narrowly missed out on selection for the 2004 Olympics.

After serving with The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers he joined the APTC in 2007 before landing the role of boxing coach in June this year.

And with the season now under way he has one clear objective as his boxers return to the ring.

"My aim is to retain that [Combined Services] title.

"In recent times it has always been the Army versus the Royal Navy so it will be interesting to see what the Royal Air Force comes up with.

"I know the Navy have some good guys coming in from civilian clubs so it should be a tough competition," Davis told *SoldierSport*.

Like many sports within the Army the pressure of operational commitments has limited availability for selection but every effort is being made to ensure the coach has the strongest squad possible.

"It is difficult to get fighters released due to the operational tempo and I am very grateful to the units for allowing the guys to come," Davis said.

"I have been contacting the civilian clubs saying that if any of their guys have left to join the Army to contact me.

"I will try and track them down and hopefully bring them on.

"We already have three coming along this season. It is really good in that respect, we are trying to get greater strength in depth.

"There is massive potential and we are going to have a strong team."

To help the squad flourish Davis has secured a unique partnership with the University of Essex that will see fighters have every aspect of their performance assessed by sports scientists as the season progresses.

The thrilled Newcastle native said:

"There is going to be a massive sense of professionalism in our training.

"I am being well supported by the APTC and I want to promote boxing within the Army and build more of a team spirit.

"It is going to be tough during the initial stages of training but you need that if you want to succeed." ■

SPORT SHORTS

BOXING sensation Nathan Cleverly invited soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh to his gym ahead of their deployment to Afghanistan this month.

The 22-year-old light heavyweight welcomed the special guests during a break in preparations for his Commonwealth title defence against Courtney Fry at Belfast's Odyssey Arena on October 9.

Proud Welshman Cleverly is one of the rising stars of British boxing and was honoured to spend time with the soldiers on the eve of their tour.

He said: "People say boxers are brave for getting in the ring, but you've got to be even braver to be a soldier and I've got nothing but admiration for these boys.

"The guys fighting for our country are an inspiration to me. When you look at things in perspective you realise they are putting their lives on the line every day.

"It was a privilege to meet the troops and I wish them the best of luck.

"They'll make Wales proud, and fingers crossed I can lift their spirits by winning my next fight in style."

As well as supporting the troops, Cleverly has also given his backing to the Army Benevolent Fund and will be wearing a "Support The Royal Welsh in Afghanistan" wristband.

ARMY judo players faced a stern test of their London 2012 aspirations when they locked horns with the sport's finest at the World Championships in Rotterdam.

Encouraging performances from Cpl Abbas Salihu (9 Regt RLC), Fus Victor Ahiavor (1 RRF) and Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) left the Service with high hopes of being represented at the 2012 Olympics as attention turns to the London Games.

Rotterdam was the first time the Army has seen three competitors in action at the tournament and elite players' manager Maj Simon Childs (Rifles) was delighted with such a successful return in what is the squad's first year of full-time training.

He told *SoldierSport*: "This was a very encouraging performance. For three soldiers to have qualified for a World Championships is a major breakthrough.

"The team showed much potential and this bodes well for the next phase in the plan to get soldiers competing in the 2012 Olympic Games."

Ahiavor and Salihu both made the round of 64 on their World Championship debuts while Nartey went one better by making the last 32.

Childs added: "In terms of their presence as soldiers from the British Army they were great ambassadors.

"They really did a positive job of flying the Forces flag. They were a credit to themselves and the Army."

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Distance dreams: Tom Meldrum hopes to raise around £10,000 for charity by running 140 miles in 24 hours during the Sri Chinmoy challenge in London

Ultra-marathon man

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Mike Weston

RUNNING a marathon is often considered as the pinnacle of any endurance athlete's career.

But for Maj (Retd) Tom Meldrum the 26-mile run is small change compared to the challenge he faces later this month.

The former Royal Artillery officer will be pushing his body to the limit by taking part in the Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 24-Hour Track Race, a gruelling contest that requires athletes to run as far as they can in one day.

SoldierSport met the 37-year-old on one of his regular training runs to learn more about his motivation to compete and the event itself.

Meldrum said: "It started as an attempt to run 100 miles in 24 hours but I have increased my target to somewhere near 140 miles.

"Part of my motivation is the possibility of being selected for the Great Britain team to compete in next year's World 24-Hour Championships.

"But the most important thing about this is raising money for the Down's Syndrome Association.

"My nephew George has Down's. A

lot of people run marathons, which is great, but I wanted to be really tested. I hope to run between 130 and 150 miles but my real aim is to raise £10,000."

Meldrum, who works as a capability integration manager on the artillery desk at HQ Land Forces, was invited to take part after he ran 76 miles to win the Crawley 12-Hour Ultra Marathon in April.

His training regime will peak at around 160 miles of running each week, which includes a 0430 alarm call every morning for the first session of the day.

"Some days it is great and I cannot wait to get out but 80 per cent of the time it is extremely hard work," explained Meldrum.

"It is difficult getting up at 0430 in the rain and in the dark but if I don't go

out and train, trying to run non-stop for 24 hours will be impossible.

"The more miles I do now the easier it will be on the day."

After completing the Sri Chinmoy at London's Tooting Bec track, Meldrum has no intention of hanging up his spikes and is already looking ahead to new endurance challenges.

He hopes to make the national team for the world championships in France next year and has also set himself the target of completing the Badwater Ultra Marathon, a 135-mile run through Death Valley from the lowest point to the highest point in the USA.

● To support Meldrum in his Sri Chinmoy challenge visit www.justgiving.com/24hrs_100miles ■

SPORT SHORTS

POWERBOAT star Maj Greg Marsden (25 Engineer Regiment) has helped raise £2,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund by racing around the British coastline.

He was part of the Team Pulsar-Racing crew that competed in the 2008 Round Britain Offshore Power Boat Race.

Their efforts raised more than £16,000

which has been divided between a host of different good causes.

Only two boats managed to complete the gruelling 1,600-mile course, with Marsden's *Vampire* being one of those. He is now preparing for a world record attempt to circumnavigate Ireland in less than 16 hours.

SPORT SHORTS

THE Army was well represented in the Great Britain Mounted Skill at Arms ladies team that has just returned from international action in South Africa.

Despite narrowly losing to a side that is considered the best in the world, the women walked away with individual gold and bronze medals.

Mounted skill at arms, which is also known as tentpegging, is an equestrian event in which competitors have to compete a range of target-related tasks using a sword, lance and revolver.

The Great Britain side featured Cpl Bex Wottage, Pte Laura Grubb and Maj Ange Edwards (all RLC).

THE Army Badminton Championships will be held early next month and organisers are inviting players of all standards to take part.

Grantham-based 5 Trg Regt RLC is hosting the event from November 2-6.

For more information call SSgt Jim Daley on 94342 2341.

BOXERS took to the ring at JHQ Rheindahlen to raise money for Help for Heroes and the homeless in the German city of Monchengladbach.

A number of Army units were represented at the event, which featured 12 bouts in classifications ranging from light welterweight to super heavyweight.

The evening, which also included a charity auction, raised a total of £10,000.

GERMANY-based 17 Battery, 26 Regiment Royal Artillery have been crowned champions of Exercise Sheldrake Gladiator.

The challenge combined military skills with sporting talent in tasks ranging from shooting, navigation and battle casualty treatment to six-a-side football, basketball and rugby sevens.

The triumphant 17 Battery finished on 107 points, two clear of close rivals J Battery, 3 Royal Horse Artillery.

The event, organised by 1 (UK) Armoured Division in Germany, was held at the training ranges in Sennelager and the sports pitches at Bad Lippspringe.

NEWCASTLE Racecourse is dedicating a meeting to the Armed Forces next month as part of its fundraising effort for the Army Benevolent Fund.

The Fighting Fifth Hurdle, named after the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, is the highlight of the course's jump season as champion jockeys from across the UK compete for the Triple Crown.

The meeting will be held on Saturday, November 28, and military personnel can take advantage of the Value for Valour promotion, which allows them to buy one ticket and get one free.

For more information about the day call 01912 362020.



Flying high: Bdr Simon Tomkinson (26 Regt RA) on his way to a fifth-place finish in the cable discipline

Picture: Graeme Main

Down to the wire

A DOMINANT display in the cable competition guided the Army to glory at the Inter-Services wakeboarding championships.

With soldiers occupying the top five places a healthy lead was established as the contest entered the boat discipline.

The Royal Air Force made serious inroads into the Army's lead during the second phase but a third-place finish from SSgt Mark Tillett (REME) – who was crowned Inter-Services champion – ensured his team retained its title.

Cpl Dale Crossley (RE) impressed on his tournament debut, finishing top of the cable rankings, while Sgt Gav Groves (RA) gave consistent performances over both days.

Capt Kerry Gospel (RLC), who skippered the team, was thrilled with his side's success at the British Water Ski Centre in Chertsey, which also played host to the Army championships a week earlier.

He told *SoldierSport*: "It is now getting more serious than ever. It started as a group of enthusiasts trying to promote the sport and satisfy the Army Sport Control Board.

"But we are now much stronger, we are using video analysis and science and there is the potential for riders to make UK competitions next year."

The Army finished second in the Inter-Services waterskiing competition, which was won by the RAF. ■

Divers star in Jurassic Shark trilogy

SERVICES sub-aqua stars will travel to Costa Rica next year for Exercise Jurassic Shark 3.

The divers will form part of the Joint Services shark tagging team that will be helping to produce a documentary film about shark research and conservation at Cocos Island – the setting for the film *Jurassic Park*.

They will come face to face with the scalloped hammerhead shark and will use the trip to chart movement patterns across the Eastern Pacific tropical seascape.

Expedition leader Maj Andy Reid said:

"An expedition such as this is all about experiencing controlled exposure to risk with the aim of developing the leadership, teamwork, courage and cooperation that is vital to military operational capability."

Any military sub-aqua divers interested in joining the expedition should visit www.jurassic-shark.org.uk

● The Joint Services Sub Aqua Diving Conference will be held at RAF Halton on December 6 and 7. Email Maskellp296@halton.raf.mod.uk for more details. ■

THE OFFICIAL BRITISH ARMY FITNESS GUIDE

STAYING HEALTHY

As any athlete knows, consistency is key to improving fitness performance. So there is nothing worse than being hampered by injury. Sensible preventative procedures, such as beginning a session with a warm-up, ending with a cool-down and progressing at an appropriate rate, will help minimise the risks. But there are a few other precautions worth taking to avoid both chronic (overuse) and acute (sudden onset) injuries.

BE BODY AWARE

Always use good technique when you are warming up, exercising or stretching. Do not use momentum or force to put yourself into a position or lift a weight that you cannot achieve with control. It can help to use a mirror to check your form.

LIFT WEIGHTS SAFELY

Whether it is a heavy box or a dumbbell, there are a few rules you should observe when lifting any weight from the floor:

- Stand close to the object with feet hip-distance apart and knees bent;
- Take hold of the item and bring it to your body before pushing through to standing;
- Never bend forwards from the waist as this can potentially damage your back.

RUN SAFELY

Running gets a bad name in the injury stakes – as many as seven-out-of-ten runners are halted by injury in any given year. While poor technique is often to blame, people also attempt to do too much, too soon. The Army has identified a link between aerobic fitness and injury – slow runners are three times more likely to get injured than fast runners during basic training. If you suffer a serious injury, seek medical help. For less serious problems, use rest, ice, compression and elevation.

Soldier readers can buy the Official British Army Fitness Guide, published by Guardian Books, for the discounted price of only £8.99 plus postage and packing (RRP £12.99). Visit guardianbooks.co.uk or call 0845 606 4232 and quote "Soldier"



SPORT SHORTS

A NEW Army flag has been raised at Aldershot Town's EBB Stadium as part of the ongoing relationship between the Service and the League Two side.

General manager Richard Petty invited Col Tim Forster of Aldershot Garrison to make the presentation ahead of the fixture with Hereford last month.

Aldershot will continue supporting the Army by offering discounted ticket prices for all League Two fixtures.

SWINDON Town Football Club will be hosting a series of military days over the course of the season to raise money for different Service charities.

The Robins will be offering reduced ticket prices for the matches with Leyton Orient on December 5 and Tranmere Rovers on April 5.

Military personnel and their families can buy tickets at the discount rate of £10 for adults and £1 for children via the club's box office.

Service ID cards must be shown at the point of sale or on collection and there is a maximum of two adults and three children per family package.



Picture: Graeme Main

Devastating display: A stunning performance with both bat and ball from Pte Shane Lottering helped 2 Para secure the major units cricket crown in Aldershot

Lottering numbers guide Paras to victory

A SUPERB all-round performance from Pte Shane Lottering inspired 2 Para to major units cricket final glory.

The right-hander put The Pilgrims' bowling attack to the sword as he smashed 64 off just 63 deliveries.

His hard-hitting helped 2 Para to a competitive total of 222 from their 40

overs in a close-fought match at the Army Cricket Ground in Aldershot.

Fielding first, The Pilgrims claimed two quick wickets, but resolute batting from Cpl James Jarret (45) helped turn the tide as the opener shared a 118-run stand with the impressive Lottering.

Cpl Stewart Forster added a quick-fire

32 and Cpl Paul Lloyd struck 28 from 19 deliveries as the total raced past 200.

The Pilgrims struggled to form any meaningful partnerships as Lloyd claimed 3-16 in a destructive eight-over burst.

Pte Scott Williams took 1-28 from his eight overs before Lottering enjoyed a spell of 4-51 to help seal a 16-run win. ■

final word



We asked operational award winners about the value of tri-Service cooperation

INTERVIEWS: CLIFF CASWELL
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



A/SJT MARK POWIS (Rifles)

It was quite a shock when I found out I was being awarded the Military Cross. I was called down to the CO's office and wondered what I had done wrong. We did a lot of work with the Royal Marines before we deployed – they do things a little differently to us but we get along extremely well with them, as we do with all of our multinational colleagues.



LT CDR ALI HOFMAN (RN)

I'm in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service and received the Royal Red Cross Medal after working at the hospital at Camp Bastion, Helmand province. My squadron was tri-Service, with Army doctors and nurses and health professionals from other allied nations. Medical staff are used to working in a joint arena and realise we are all there for a single purpose.



LT COL JOE CAVANAGH (Rifles)

I am delighted to have been awarded the Distinguished Service Order. We joined 3 Commando Brigade (3 Cdo Bde) in April 2008 while we were in Belize and came straight back into pre-deployment training. Going on operations so soon after joining the brigade was great – the riflemen had the opportunity to work with the Royal Marines and to see each other's methods.



GNR GRANT GUY (RA)

It hasn't sunk in yet that I have been awarded the Military Cross. We were pinned down after being ambushed. I had run over to an injured comrade and had tried to give first aid before talking fire onto the enemy. It was great working alongside the Royal Marines. Being a commando brigade we worked together to the highest of standards and we love the commando ethos.



A/CPL BRADLEY MALONE (RM)

Having worked with the Army on tour I have to say that I found them outstanding at their job and I couldn't speak more highly of them – we built up an excellent relationship. I have been awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross for three incidents, one of which involved evacuating my wounded sergeant, who had become caught in the open after a contact.



MAJ NATHAN WEBBER (RA)

I have just received an MBE for my work with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles on Op Herrick. Going on tour with 3 Cdo Bde was a really rewarding experience. We worked very well with the other Services while we were at Camp Bastion. The success was down to a combination of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force pilots as well as those serving with the Army Air Corps.



A/WO2 JOHN LESTER (RLC)

I have received the Queen's Gallantry Medal for my counter-IED work. The multinational aspect of the mission in Afghanistan is interesting – you can learn a lot from other countries. They all have a slightly different take on life. In the same way, there are differences between the UK Armed Forces, but it is great to work with them. You're always getting the chance to meet new people.



LT COL ALAN LITSTER (RM)

I was the chief of staff for 3 Cdo Bde in Helmand province. The Royal Marines have close links with the Infantry and during the Herrick tour our forces were also well supported by Apache attack helicopters. I'm delighted to have received an OBE for my part in the operation – it was fantastic to lead such a committed staff and a privilege to be part of a combined effort.



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